

goggle problems

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goggle problems

by [havocrat](#)

Summary

They glare at each other for a moment, a foot apart, breathing heavily. Both of them are spitting mad, and neither one of them is going to back down. George's eyes shift to Dream's mouth for a fraction of a second. (He can feel Dream's breath. It's annoying.)

"Why do you have to be so fucking obnoxious all the time," Dream grits out. It isn't a question.

"You're the one who's making me look like an idiot in front of Coach. You're the one who's done nothing but cause problems since *mmph*—"

Right when he's talking, Dream rudely interrupts him by surging forward and pressing their lips together.

—or, dream is the annoying new guy on george's swim team. he might be... conventionally attractive, and kind of funny, and occasionally nice, but george doesn't have a crush on him. not even a little.

Notes

for luke, marcus, and ethan. at its core, *goggle problems* is a love letter to swimming and everyone who does it, but especially these three. i love you guys <3

hi everyone!! welcome to my newest project. i grew up as a swimmer, so swimmers!dnf is something i've been thinking about for a while. here it is—my magnum opus, my chef d'oeuvre, my masterpiece: goggle problems.

this fic will contain a lot of swearing, as well as eventual NSFW (so, like, if you know me irl, no you don't). as of right now George and Dream are both fine with fics of this nature being written about them, but if that ever changes, i will take this down.

also—i deliberately didn't really specify if this is a high school or college AU, because i'm familiar with and really enjoy the dynamics of a high school swim team, but also i really don't want them to be like 16. so please just imagine them being like decently old? i guess??

ALSO—yes, they drink alcohol in this chapter. even dream. just pretend this is an alternate universe in which george and dream are on the same swim team and ALSO happen to drink alcohol pls and thank u

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Hell

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It's only one day into Hell Week, and George is already ready to murder his teammate in cold blood. No, seriously. Earlier in the season, when Dream first joined the swim team, he was tolerable—maybe even pleasant. At first, George was determined to make friends with him. But he quickly learned what a bad idea that was.

A bad attitude never pays off, their coach always tells them. But for some reason, that doesn't seem to apply to Dream. George has never seen him put in any effort to improve, but he just keeps getting faster and faster.

He started in the bottom lane, but each week he moves closer and closer to the top of the pool. Closer and closer to *George*. And George has been working to keep his spot in the first lane for years. He's determined not to lose it to someone like Dream. He doesn't think anyone who has poured their heart and soul into their swimming deserves to be moved out of their spot for someone like Dream. He resents the boy more and more with every swimmer he displaces.

To make matters worse, Dream is insufferable. He's so full of himself, and he never puts any effort in or admits any of his faults. It's like he doesn't even realise all the room he has for improvement, but he just keeps improving anyway. George used to believe in karma, in a universal force of fairness, but Dream is walking, talking proof of the opposite. *Good things happen to good people*, George reminds himself regularly. (It's how he stops himself from being a jerk every time he wants to.) But good things happen to Dream all the time, and he's a jerk either way. It's just... not fair. It's not fair at all.

He's currently laughing and joking with everyone else in the locker room, pretending he isn't the devil incarnate. George isn't sure why nobody else on the team has noticed the little glowing red horns poking out of his sandy blonde curls. (Okay, there might not actually be devil horns on his head. But if anything was right with the world, they would be there. He's sure of it.)

It's fine. It's fine. He's just going to keep changing quietly, facing his locker. He's going to mind his own business, and he is *not* going to turn around and start an argument.

"I can't figure out why they call it Hell Week," Dream drawls in his hideous American accent, loud and obnoxious. "Practice today seemed easy enough to me."

The team laughs, and fine, maybe George *is* going to turn around and start an argument. "That's because you're meant to actually *try*, Dream."

From next to him, his teammate and best friend, Karl, kicks his shin. "George, be nice." Most of the team just ignores him, well aware of George's feelings towards Dream.

"Don't worry, it gets worse," Sapnap—another teammate—promises, smacking Dream's shoulder. "You'll feel it tomorrow, buddy."

George, of course, knows all this. It's his third season on the team, and even when he was a freshman, he wasn't as clueless as this brand-new sophomore. The exact functioning of hell week, their most intense week of training, isn't exactly rocket science. It's the winter holidays, the last week without school before the championship season, so the team spends every spare minute

training. Here's how it works: You go to practice, tire yourself out, go to practice the next day, get more tired, and so on. By New Year's Eve, you're just about ready to drop dead. (So you do. But not before getting utterly shit-faced in someone's stuffy suburban basement.)

He turns back to his locker, rolling his eyes. He doesn't even realise the team conversation has devolved into several smaller, quieter side conversations until Dream, who has the locker next to him for some godforsaken reason, elbows his side.

"Jealousy doesn't look good on you," he stage-whispers.

"That haircut doesn't look good on you, but you don't see me being rude about it," George scoffs. (He's lying. It is, objectively speaking, a perfectly acceptable haircut.) "Why would I be jealous of someone in lane three?" His voice turns sarcastic, mocking. "Oh *gee*, I *really* wish my technique was as bad as Dream's so I could be six foot three and still lose every race."

Dream doesn't reply, and George discreetly uncaps his expo marker and draws another tally by his name on the tiny whiteboard stuck inside his locker. He's pulled ahead again—he's now got seven points, and Dream's only got six.

He yanks his t-shirt over his head, then turns to shoot a pointed look at Dream. "Hurry up, or you'll be late to conditioning." He makes sure the locker room door slams shut behind him.

He doesn't feel bad for being rude. Sure, it's the day after Christmas, and the holiday season is supposed to be about kindness, but *someone* needs to put that self-obsessed asshole in his place. He posts a photo of the pool door on his private story, captioned, *GUY'S. Annoying Kid just said he doesn't think hell week is hard.... Who's gonna tell him it's only Monday??*

The rest of Hell Week passes in a blur of aching limbs and George watches with glee as Dream is forced to eat his words, exhausted by day three.

Hell week ends, mercifully, on December 31st. Not because Coach chose to end it there, but because there won't be any pools open on New Year's Day.

As hard as the team works every December, they're just as good at letting loose and ending the year with a bang. Not having practice on January 1st means they can do whatever they want without worrying about being hungover at practice. This year, the swim team NYE party is being hosted by Niki, one of George's best friends.

George isn't sure if he believes that, but he knows that tonight will be a night to remember. He's usually not much of a drinker, but he can handle his alcohol.

Niki texts him, *what r u gonna wear tn?? what should i wear???*

He helpfully replies, *Clothes*, then turns his phone off and chucks it at his bed. It bounces off and thumps onto the floor. New Years' Eve is typically a time to dress up, but most of the guys on the team are... fashion challenged. He's sure at least two of them will show up in a t-shirt and sweatpants. He tries to find a middle ground; there's a fine line between well-dressed and overdressed. After several different attempts, he ends up in simple black pants and a white button-down (unbuttoned enough to be casual, but not enough to be douchey. He hopes).

He opens his conversation with Niki. *u know we need to look good if we want to get any new years kisses*, she's texted him. *u need to get ur count up. uve kissed, what, 3 ppl?*

Ok???? It's called having standards, he shoots back. He takes a photo of his outfit in the mirror and sends it to her.

wtf, she replies within seconds. *how do u always get the vibe exactly right??? tell me ur secrets or else.*

It is LITERALLY your party. Couldn't you just set whatever vibe you want?? But he likes her message anyway, then jokes back, *It's just bc I'm hot ig... I'd look good in anything.*



He shows up to the party fashionably late. To make an entrance, of course. Not because he forgot his phone at home and had to turn around to go get it. Or anything like that. When he finally walks in, bad rap music is blasting out of Niki's shitty speaker system. Her tiny basement is packed with swimmers and divers—some standing in groups, some dancing to this horrible song, some behind the bar pouring shots into plastic cups. George squeezes his way through to the centre of the room.

“You’re here!” Karl shouts over the music. His attire is surprisingly appropriate. His sister probably picked out that outfit for him. “Come get a drink with me.”

George follows his friend to the corner, and when a shot glass is pushed into his hand, he downs it easily. It burns its way down his throat and into his chest, where an echo of it lingers as a floaty buzz that makes him smile at Karl's cheers.

“Will you make me a rum and coke?” George asks Puffy, another swimmer. As the self-appointed ‘mom’ of the team, Puffy is the unofficial bartender at most team parties. She also doesn't drink, so she's always nice to have around when things get too wild.

Wordlessly, she gets to work on his drink, shovelling ice into a cup. The song changes and Sapnap runs up, clutching at Karl's arm. “Guys, it's our song!”

It's “Bank Account” by 21 Savage. George throws his head back and laughs, dancing along with his friends. They jump up and down, spinning in a circle together.

Bad bitch, cute face and some nice titties, the song says. George and Sapnap both turn to each other at the same time and say “That's you,” then dissolve into giggles.

George hears someone call his name, then turns around to see Puffy holding his drink out to him. *Gogy* is scrawled messily across the side of the cup. That's been his nickname since he was little, when his goggles would fall off every time he dove in at the start of a race.

He takes a sip and wanders off to say hello to everyone. He finds a group of girls and lets them spin him around to the tuneless beat. He even joins in on their gossip session until they bring up Dream, at which point he hurries away to find a different group. He ends up with a group of freshmen having a passionate debate about Fortnite. He educates them on the wonders of better, more worthwhile games, like Minecraft.

When he thinks his head will explode if he hears one more ‘pogchamp,’ he goes to look for Karl.

He finds him and Sapnap on the floor in the corner, sitting criss-cross around a... is that a *microwave*? They're using it as a table while Karl paints Sapnap's nails. He takes a photo of them, captions it *Omg couplegoals*, and posts it on his private story. They'll kill him for it later, but right now it's too funny not to. Karl and Sapnap aren't really a couple—they're just very close platonic friends. (Or so they say. George ships them anyway.)

He sits with them, joining their stupid debate about Pokemon, and occasionally sipping his drink. Before he realises it, he tips the cup up and the only thing that comes out is ice. He excuses himself and wanders back over to the bar for a refill.

George is leaning on the bar, waiting for his drink, when two large hands appear on either side of his, boxing him in, and he registers a low voice behind him. "Take a shot with me," Dream says into his ear, like it's a secret, and George shivers. In revulsion. Obviously. It has nothing to do with the firmness of the chest that's pressed against his back, or the size of the hands trapping him in place.

"Get off," George says, turning around and pushing Dream away. "Hey, I have a New Year's resolution for you: stop being such an asshole."

"Well, I've got one for you," Dream shoots back, already getting two empty shot glasses out of the cupboard. "Get rid of that stick up your ass." He smirks. "Though you probably like it."

George wonders for a second if Dream's being homophobic, but quickly dismisses the thought. Dream's a jerk and an asshole and a monster and everything, but George doubts he's homophobic. Besides, George is out, but it's not something people talk about. He's pretty sure Dream doesn't even know that he's gay. He's probably just trying to make an innuendo. (And not a particularly good one, at that.)

George rolls his eyes, grabbing the nearest handle of cheap vodka and pouring some into each glass. "What can I say, I've gotta stay ready for your dad."

Dream's expression drops instantly. "My dad's dead."

George falters. He opens his mouth, but no sound comes out. Is the reason Dream's been such an asshole because he's *grieving*? Dream's recovering from a devastating loss, and instead of giving him the benefit of the doubt, George has been unforgivably rude to him for weeks. How can he backtrack from something like that?

Just as suddenly, Dream cracks a smile, and then he's doubled over laughing. "Oh man, I got you," he wheezes. "I got you so good." He's laughing like it was the funniest joke in the world, hitting the counter and gasping for air, and for just a brief, tiny second, George can see why people might be friends with this guy. But then embarrassment kicks in, and he can only glare up at the blonde (yes, *up*. Dream may be well over six foot, but George wasn't blessed with the same superhuman genetics. At five foot eight (and a half), George is almost a full head shorter).

He shoves Dream's shot in front of him. "Shut up. Drink," he orders gruffly.

They down their shots, and George smugly notes that he takes his better than Dream, who winces and coughs.

"Can't hang?" he asks innocently.

"Fuck off."

Dream refills their glasses and holds one out. George eyes him skeptically. "It's barely ten o'clock,

Dream. Are you gonna be passed out before midnight?"

"Why do you care?" Dream asks, tipping his head back and pouring the shot down his throat. If George watches his throat as he swallows it, it's the alcohol corrupting his brain, not any fault of his. "You wanna be my New Year's kiss or something?"

He scoffs. "I'd rather kiss an ashtray." He feels Dream's eyes on him as he takes his own shot without making a face. (Normally, he doesn't like to show off. But right now it feels important to prove he's better than Dream in every conceivable way.)

Puffy hands him his drink, now refilled, and he walks away before Dream can rope him into more conversation. He lets himself have a good time, laughing and dancing with his friends. In a blur of shots, and games, and terrible music, he progresses from pleasantly buzzed to properly drunk. The room gets a little blurrier, his steps get a little less steady, and when he talks, it comes out funny.

Even drunk, George knows his limits, and around 11:30 he pours himself a glass of water and steps into the hallway to get some air. Dream is out there for some reason, sitting against the wall.

"Fuck'n hate you," George says, more as a greeting than anything else.

Dream just hums his agreement, and George sits down clumsily across from him, only spilling a tiny bit of his water. If Dream had said something, maybe George wouldn't be sitting down to join him, but Dream is almost tolerable when he's not talking.

George tells him as much. "You're almost tolerable when you're not talking."

One side of Dream's mouth threatens to pull up into a smile before he regains his poker face. "That's where we're different, I guess, because you're never tolerable, whether you're talking or not."

George just scoffs.

Dream squints over at him. "How come you're such a dick all the time?"

"Believe me, it's not easy," George proclaims. "I've got to work hard at it every day. But you, you just seem to be born this way. You don't even have to try. Just like in swimming, I guess."

Dream's mad now. "I *do* try. I've worked hard to get my place on the team, and since I started, I've been consistently dropping time. How much harder do I have to work to impress you?"

"Don't bother." George stands. "Nothing you do could ever impress me."

He goes upstairs to finish his water, and when he comes back down to rejoin the party, the hallway is empty. Dream must have already gone back in.

"Gogy!" someone yells when he walks in, and everyone cheers. The music's been turned down, and the Times Square NYE show is on the TV. He grins. Even Dream can't spoil his good mood tonight. He loves his friends, and he's going to celebrate the new year with his favourite people.

Niki runs up to him, and she grabs his hand and twirls him around. "Hiiii," she slurs. "Come do another shot with us."

She drags him over to the bar, where Karl offers him a shot glass that's filled to the brim.

"You definitely didn't wash that shot glass," George points out. "That's unsanitary." Instead—in

the interest of being sanitary, of course—he reaches out and drinks straight from the bottle, to raucous cheers and laughter from his friends. It's ten minutes to midnight, and he's a carefree teenager, surrounded by the people he loves most.

Some pop star is performing on the TV, and together they all dance around Niki's tiny basement until they're breathless with giggles. There's a feeling of anticipation, and as midnight draws closer, the rising energy in the room is almost tangible. Eventually, the music ends, and all there's left to do is to wait for the ball to drop and the new year to start. George goes to the back of the room, close to the bar, to catch his breath.

“Wait, wait, turn off all the lights,” someone yells, and a few seconds later, the room is plunged into almost-darkness, the only light coming from the countdown on the TV.

George frowns. “Why?” he asks the figure next to him, whose face is obscured by darkness.

The person laughs, and he recognizes the voice of his teammate, Tina. “‘Cause. It's sexy and mysterious. And besides, nobody wants to *see* all the gross couples doing all that ‘New Year's kiss’ stuff.” With that, she wanders off to join everyone else.

George leans back against the bar, feeling the cold press of granite through his shirt. He can only see silhouettes, once-familiar teammates now anonymous shapes in the dim glow of the television. People are putting on party hats and doling out noisemakers, buzzing with excitement. There's only a minute left in the year. George laughs at the commotion, finishing his rum and coke. When did he get a refill? He can't remember.

At thirty seconds to midnight, someone comes and stands next to him. Even in darkness, it's obvious who it is—this silhouette is at least three inches taller than everyone else.

“Dream,” he says.

“George.” Dream leans back against the bar too, his arm brushing George's. There's heat radiating off of him—Dream could make good money as a walking space heater—and it makes it very difficult to ignore his presence.

“This is it,” George intelligently observes. “End of the year.”

“Mm-hm.”

The countdown gets to fifteen seconds, and someone starts yelling the numbers along with it. Instead of joining in, George glances at Dream. To his surprise, Dream's already looking at him. In the darkness, he can see the faint outlines of his face—his nose, his jaw. The television light plays off his features, and George is transfixed.

While their friends count down around them, Dream and George just look at each other, like some kind of ridiculous childish staring contest.

“SEVEN!”

George should really look away.

“SIX!”

No, actually, *Dream* should look away. George isn't in the wrong here.

“FIVE!”

As his eyes adjust a little more, he can see the outline of Dream's mouth. His big, annoying, stupid mouth.

"FOUR!"

And then, suddenly, Dream's lips are on his, and his eyes are fluttering shut as his lips tingle with the pressure. He doesn't know who moved towards who, or what he's doing right now, but Dream's mouth is burning hot against his, and almost involuntarily, he grabs a fistful of the taller boy's shirt, pulling him closer, and closer, and closer.

Unexpectedly, Dream's teeth catch his lower lip and *bite* it, and it pulls a sound out of George that he's never made before. He's sure the party's still happening around them, but for all he knows, the room could be burning down and he wouldn't notice.

"Fuck," he manages, and then their lips slot together again, harder and rougher than before. There's something weird about this, he's sure, but he can hardly remember his own name, let alone why this might be a bad idea.

He pulls back slightly, and they're just breathing heavily, mouths millimetres apart. Then Dream's tugging him backwards, and they stumble into a closet. George shuts the door behind them, and then he's being pushed against it, and there are lips on his again.

God, what is happening? Is this— Is Dream— Are they *kissing* right now? No, it couldn't be. He's kissed people before, and this is *nothing* like that. Besides, Dream would never kiss him. *He* would never kiss Dream. And yet, here he is in a closet with his worst enemy, and they are kissing.

This is all Dream's fault. So, as a punishment, he slides his hands into Dream's hair and pulls on it, and Dream groans into his mouth. He can hardly hear anything over his own heartbeat in his ears, and it's so much, and Dream's tongue is on his lips, in his mouth, and he can feel it everywhere.

It's a messy, careless kiss, all tongues and teeth and gasping breaths. "*George,*" Dream moans, and firm hands dig into his thighs, lifting him up to wrap his legs around Dream's waist. The closeness sends sparks up George's spine, and this might be the dumbest thing he's ever done, but *fuck* if it isn't the hottest, too.

"More," he demands, pulling harder at sandy, chlorine-damaged hair. "Kiss me, idiot."

"I am kissing you, dumbass," Dream murmurs, biting George's lip again and making his breath hitch. George can barely think anything other than *oh my god oh my god what the fuck*. He kisses back hard and searingly hot, until Dream pulls away.

He's confused for a second, and then he feels lips on his neck, and *holy shit* he did not expect that to feel like this. He's hot all over, every brain cell taken over by the point of contact where Dream's mouth is burning a red-hot path down his throat. He feels Dream's mouth open, his tongue against his skin, and he whines at the feeling of it, the tingles shooting down his spine. Dream sucks on a sensitive spot, and George arches into it, gasping for air. He sinks into the pleasure, mind clouding over.

Then, unexpected pain explodes from the sensitive juncture where his neck meets his shoulder, shattering his bubble of bliss, and he can't suppress the whimper that escapes. He only understands what happened when Dream soothes over the same spot with his tongue, and George realises he left a bite mark. The pain is slowly fading, but the heat it sent pooling into his gut isn't going away.

“You *bit* me, what the fuck,” he says breathlessly, yanking Dream back up by his hair until their lips crash together again.

Barely a second later, the doorknob rattles behind him, and they both freeze. Someone says, “Jillian, that isn’t the fucking bathroom, that’s a closet,” and the rattling stops.

Dream, who had been pinning George to the door with a hand under each of his thighs, lets go abruptly, stepping back as far as the tiny closet will allow. George slides down the door and barely manages to catch himself on unsteady legs. It’s a miracle he can even support his own weight after the life-altering few minutes he’s just had, but somehow he manages it.

He doesn’t look at Dream. He’s not sure he wants to see what the arrogant American looks like with his hair all messed up and his lips swollen and red. (Because Dream would look totally ugly like that and not at all hot.)

“Um, I better– I’m gonna– Bye,” Dream says.

George steps aside to let him pass, with the most casual “See ya,” he can muster. When he’s alone, he leans back on the door again, sinking into a puddle of goo on the floor. (It’s pretty dark in there, so he can’t tell for sure, but he’s like, 80% sure that he’s turning into a gelatinous blob of pain and suffering on the concrete floor of a closet in his friend’s basement.)

He didn’t even get to celebrate the new year. One minute he was waiting for the ball to drop so he could yell *Happy New Year!* and drink champagne and put on a party hat, and by the next, he had completely lost control of all his limbs. And his lips. And his vocal cords, apparently. Maybe he got possessed by a demon? It’s a plausible theory; worth looking into. Much more likely than him actually kissing Dream, or Dream actually kissing him.

Once he’s recovered, he finally emerges from the closet, hoping nobody notices him. The lights are back on, and people are standing in groups, talking. Some people are rinsing out plastic cups and throwing them in the recycling, some people are setting up sleeping arrangements for everyone that’s sleeping over. He can’t help but scan the room for a certain tall blonde, but Dream is nowhere to be found. He heads over to his friends. “Hey, have you guys seen Dream?”

“Oh, he left, like two seconds ago,” Sapnap says. “It’s weird, I thought he was planning on sleeping over. But he had someone come pick him up.” He squints at George. “Hey, are you okay? You look a little... shell-shocked.”

“M fine,” George mumbles, but he’s a little overwhelmed. Even after sitting in the closet alone for ten minutes, he’s *still* reeling from the kiss, and he certainly didn’t expect Dream to *leave*. Is George really that bad of a kisser? “Just... tired. I’m gonna– I’m gonna go to sleep.”

It’s all a little too much. He stumbles over to the nearest couch and buries his face in the cushions. If he goes to sleep, he doesn’t have to think about what just happened.

Maybe he’ll wake up and find out that this was all some sick, twisted dream. The sounds of the party fade away, and he falls asleep to the only thought his drunken mind can conjure up: *what the actual fuck?*

hi, i'm goose! check out my [twitter](#) if you're looking for fic updates, extra scenes, and/or me being a toxic dnfer on a daily basis :)

Collision

Chapter Summary

“Don’t be stupid,” he’s scolded. “It’s January, you’ll freeze.” Dream pulls his swim team parka, the one that says *DREAM* across the back, out of his locker and drapes it across George’s shoulders. “There.”

The jacket is soft and surprisingly warm, and it smells like... George isn’t exactly sure *what* it smells like. He’s sure that if he got up close to Dream, this is exactly what he would smell like too. It’s not terrible. It’s, like, okay. He guesses. Like, it doesn’t smell *good* or anything, but also, he wouldn’t be upset if he was, like, forced to smell it more often. Or something like that.

Chapter Notes

my sister wanted me to call this chapter “getting handsy” thought u guys would want to know that

also CW george bonks his hand in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“You’re looking shorter than usual today. Kind of like a child who got lost on the way to elementary school.”

That’s what Dream says when George walks into practice on January 2nd. It’s normal—almost jarringly so. It’s like New Year’s Eve never even happened.

“Well, you’re looking every bit as hideous as usual today,” George replies casually. “Kind of like an ogre who escaped from the circus.” And then they go about their business.

George is sure he should be relieved that nothing has changed between them, but he can’t help but feel a little disappointed as well. He still hates Dream, he doesn’t want *that* to change. But he was kind of looking forward to seeing Dream squirm—to watching Dream struggle to speak to him because of a few minutes that only they know about. He hadn’t gotten to see Dream’s reaction the other night, either, because Dream had fled. He had probably called his parents to come pick him up so he didn’t have to sleep over. All because he kissed George. All because he’s an *idiot* who decided to make out with George in a closet.

(Okay, to be fair, he’s not exactly sure who leaned in first. But it was probably Dream. It’s all a bit fuzzy—one second they weren’t kissing, the next second they were. Yeah, probably Dream’s fault. Anytime there’s a problem, it usually leads back to Dream.)

Actually, it’s a good thing they’re pretending it didn’t happen. George would like nothing more than to forget all about it—about how even though he’s older and faster and morally superior, he still was putty in Dream’s hands after, like, four drinks. He can’t help but cringe every time he

remembers what he said, what he *did*. He remembers asking—no, *ordering*—Dream to kiss him. Yuck. He would never, ever, ever, ever kiss Dream if he was sober. Kissing Dream at all sounds like a fate worse than death. And now Dream probably thinks that George *wanted* to kiss him, or *enjoyed* it, or something like that. That’s probably why he left, too—he was worried George might want to do it again. Fortunately, George doesn’t. Want to do it again, that is. He doesn’t. He definitely, certainly does not.

He grabs his equipment bag from its hook on the wall and sets up behind his lane: lane one, of course. George is the fastest boy on the team, and he’s worked his ass off for every bit of that success. He’s proud of his place in the top lane. It’s his happy place, a safe haven that he and Karl share for three hours a day, six days a week.

From behind the lane next to his, Sapnap glances at him, turns back to the pool, then whirls around again, mouth dropping open. “Dude, what the hell happened to your neck?”

He claps a hand over the dark red mark. “Nothing.” He had been foolishly hoping nobody would notice the evidence of those horrible, *horrible* few minutes, but Dream’s stupid teeth had *mauled* him in a place he had no way to cover.

“Oh my god, do you have a *hickey*? George, you sly dog. Who gave you that?”

He’s sure his face is beet red. “Shut *up*, Sapnap.” Dream’s only a few lanes away, and George does not want him to overhear this exchange. “It’s seriously nothing. I... I burned myself with my curling iron.”

“You don’t own a curling iron.”

“Okay? I burned myself with someone else’s curling iron.” It is a very good excuse. There’s no way Sapnap will see through it.

“You sit on a throne of lies,” Sapnap hisses. (He definitely stole that line from somewhere.) “Come on, fess up. Who did it?”

George sighs. “Okay. It was...” he lowers his voice, motioning for Sapnap to come closer so he can whisper conspiratorially into his ear. “...it was your mother.”

He sees the instant Sapnap’s expression sours, and he pulls back, shoving George hard. George barely registers what’s happening before his back hits the pool water.

He comes up coughing and spluttering, and fixes Sapnap with his iciest glare. “You’ve made an enemy for life,” he spits.

“*Boys*. Stop horsing around,” Coach snaps, ruining their dramatic moment. “Davidson, get out of the damn pool. Practice doesn’t start until I say it does.”

The rest of the practice is blissfully incident-free. Here, in lane one, he’s at peace—and at a safe distance from Dream, who’s in lane three with Tina. It’s a gruelling practice, and for a while, he forgets all about his nemesis.

After practice, George is innocently trying to change in the locker room, and Dream’s talking animatedly with one of the other underclassmen. He’s being obnoxious and loud and gross and annoying. George wants to file a complaint for noise pollution.

“—so I went up to talk to her,” Dream is saying, “and she literally looks at me and goes, ‘I don’t see why it’s a problem.’”

Seeing his opportunity, he jumps in. “*You’re* a problem.”

Dream scoffs. “That’s not what your mom said last night.”

George opens his mouth, and is about to reply with a ‘your dad’ joke when he remembers the last time he said something like that. New Year’s Eve. And then they....

He decides it’s better to say nothing than risk reminding Dream of the other night. He keeps his mouth shut, reluctantly turning back to his locker and adding a tally mark under Dream’s name. Now they’re tied.



For most of that week, George does a great job of avoiding Dream at practice. There’s something a little off, but they keep their insults restrained and surface-level. But George feels strangely restless until a few days later, when there’s another *incident*. One second he and Dream are bickering like usual, and the next they’re stopped in the middle of a lap, having a full-blown shouting match across their lanes in the middle of the pool.

Coach is pissed, obviously. He makes them both stay late at the end of practice while everyone else gets to go to the locker room, and they have to sit through a fifteen-minute lecture on being a good role model and how childish arguments have no place at swim practice.

When they finally trudge to the locker room to change, everyone else has already left. George manages to hold it in for long enough to pull on a t-shirt and sweatpants, but as soon as he’s decent, he turns on Dream (who is wearing pants, but not a shirt. That’s fine. It’s not a big deal. In fact, George doesn’t care at all, not even a little bit).

“That was your fault.”

Dream is incredulous. “What the hell did *I* do? You’re the one who started arguing with me.”

“You need to watch your huge, dumb mouth, Dream. I can’t believe you got us yelled at.”

“*I* got us yelled at? Are you kidding me? *I* got us yelled at? No. *You* got us yelled at. You were the one who decided to scream at me in the middle of the pool, psycho. What the fuck is your problem?” Dream’s fully facing him now, chest heaving, and George doesn’t think he’s ever seen someone look so pissed off in his life. Good, Dream should be pissed. Maybe then he can try to understand how George feels.

“My problem is *you*!” George fires back. “My problem is your stupid fucking face, and your attitude, and the way you never try at *anything*, you just strut around the pool like— like you own the place—” He cuts off, because Dream is closing the distance between them remarkably quickly, and he suddenly regrets making him quite so angry. He takes an involuntary step backwards, right against the locker.

“Shut up,” Dream says, even though George has already stopped talking.

They glare at each other for a moment, a foot apart, breathing heavily. Both of them are spitting mad, and neither one of them is going to back down. George’s eyes shift to Dream’s mouth for a fraction of a second. (He can feel Dream’s breath. It’s annoying.)

“Why do you have to be so fucking obnoxious all the time,” Dream grits out. It isn’t a question.

“You’re the one who’s making me look like an idiot in front of Coach. You’re the one who’s done nothing but cause problems since *mmp*h—”

Right when he’s talking, Dream rudely interrupts him by surging forward and pressing their lips together.

What the hell. Okay, George did not see that one coming. But now that it’s happening, he sighs with relief, melting into the kiss as he finally realises what’s had him so on edge the last few days. He’s been *craving* this. This ridiculous, annoying kiss. Why does Dream have to be such a good kisser when he’s so awful in every other way?

But it’s good—*really* good—and he understands why he’s been missing it so badly. Dream presses him into the lockers in a way that lights a fire in his stomach, and George can tell that he’s been thinking about this all week, too.

The kiss is urgent, *needy*, and soon Dream’s tongue is sliding between his lips. Dream’s stupid wet hair is dripping on him, so he threads a hand into the back of it, twisting the strands tightly around his fingers. Just to dry them, of course. Dream withdraws with a gasp, and then he’s diving back in, dragging his mouth along George’s jaw and up to his ear.

“What the hell are you doing?” George half-says, half-sighs. (It’s not his fault, okay? He’s... distracted.)

Dream stops biting at his ear for a second. “What the fuck does it look like I’m doing?” And then he’s back at George’s mouth, sucking on his bottom lip. *Fair enough*, George thinks.

Belatedly, he remembers that Dream is still shirtless. He lets his hands wander, finally feeling the body he’s been staring at all week (stupid swimmers and their stupid abs). Dream’s breath hitches as George drags his hands down his chest, and *holy shit* George cannot believe this is real.

This time, George is the one to break the kiss, dragging his mouth down the side of Dream’s neck. He’s not sure how to do this, so he just tries to copy what he’d felt Dream doing on New Year’s Eve. His kisses get more and more open-mouthed, and then he’s sucking on the column of Dream’s throat. He can tell that whatever he’s doing is working by the sound of breaths getting more and more laboured above him.

“*Fuck*, you’re good at this,” Dream gasps out, and George can’t help but groan into his neck. Their lips connect again, and strong fingers dig into the small of his back, pulling him in so he has no choice but to arch into Dream’s chest.

A few moments ago, he held all the power, but now he’s clinging to Dream’s neck, helpless to do anything but shiver and gasp as Dream licks into his mouth. Just when he thinks he can handle it, Dream starts sucking on his tongue, and he just about passes away right then and there.

And even though they should last longer, being swimmers and all, eventually they have no choice but to come up for air, and then George is just standing there, staring at Dream as reality suddenly crashes down onto them. The way they’re just facing each other, breathing hard, reminds him of a

moment in their argument earlier where they were doing the same thing—but that was different. That was different, because he was furious, and now he’s just... confused. (And a little turned on, but it’s fine, okay, it’s not a big deal, no need to talk about it.)

“Anyways,” Dream says breezily, turning back to his own locker and pulling a sweatshirt over his head. He grabs his backpack and slings it over his shoulder. “See you tomorrow.” And then he’s gone.

George sits down on the bench as the click of the door shutting behind Dream echoes through the room. He looks around, dumbfounded, letting out an incredulous laugh before dropping his head into his hands.

I have got to stop ending up like this.



George is on edge for the rest of the week, fully occupied with trying to process what happened and trying not to look at Dream. One minute they were yelling and screaming at each other, and by the next minute Dream’s tongue was down his throat. (Not literally, because that would be weird and uncomfortable, and Dream’s tongue seems to know exactly what George *does* like, and it’s very busy doing that when they kiss.)

They spend Thursday and Friday ignoring each other, trading icy silences instead of spiteful comments. George half wants to talk to him again, just to regain some sense of normalcy, but he’s not sure how to start. He gets to Saturday’s practice with a resolution: he’s not going to ignore Dream today.

He’s pulling his cap on when it happens, the worst thing all week (which, considering this week includes New Year’s Eve *and* the locker room incident, is saying a lot). The team is lined up behind the lanes, talking and getting ready, and George hears Coach go up to Quackity, Sapnap’s lane buddy, and say, “I want you in lane three today.”

No. If Coach is moving a swimmer down from lane two to lane three, that must mean he’s going to move another swimmer from lane three to lane two. Which can only mean—

“Dream!” Coach yells. “Lane two today.”

George *seethes*. He likes Quackity; he’s a good teammate and hard worker. Dream, on the other hand, is a lazy asshole who happened to win a genetic lottery. Why should Quackity be forced out of his place just to move Dream up?

For the rest of practice, George tries to forget about Dream, but he’s so much harder to ignore when he’s *right there*. It also isn’t exactly helping that practice is terrible. It’s a sprint freestyle set, which George has never been good at. He’s fast in longer events because he can be quick and

efficient, and years of hard work have given him superhuman endurance. But the shortest events have always been a lost cause for him. Sprinting comes much more easily to people like Dream, people who are tall and broad and muscular.

He struggles the whole practice. He's usually the fastest person in the pool, but today he lags behind. He's at a natural disadvantage. That doesn't stop Coach from yelling at him, though. He's doing what feels like the thousandth lap of fast freestyle that day when his hand collides with something. Hard.

At first he just feels the impact, a surprising jolt, and he stops swimming immediately, frozen in shock. Then the pain hits him, sharp and shooting all the way up his arm, and he screams into the water. Sure, he's accidentally smacked hands with people before, but never, ever this hard. Tears sting at his eyes and he stands, gasping in lungfuls of air.

Through the blur of the tears in his eyes and his fogged up goggles, he sees someone else standing up in the lane next to him. It's who he hit hands with—this is the part where they both pretend they're fine, apologise, and then go their separate ways (as per swimming etiquette).

"I'm so s—"

He stops. Because the other person is Dream. Of course it fucking is. "*You*."

Dream laughs. George's hand is throbbing, he's starting to cry (thank god for tinted goggles), and Dream fucking *laughs*. "Whoops," he says. "My bad. Are you okay?"

And that's all it takes for the anger that's been bubbling up all practice to spill over. "*Whoops?* What is *wrong* with you?"

Dream stops laughing and crosses his arms. "Me? What's wrong with *you*? I just apologised. I was being nice, and you're getting all pissy at me."

"Nice? You don't know what nice is. You just come barrelling in, taking spots away from people who deserve them, people who work harder than you. You come in, swinging your big fucking monkey arms around and you don't give a fuck who you hit, do you? Wow, how *nice* of you."

In the beat of silence after George says that, he realises that the rest of the team has finished the lap and they're all standing at the wall, watching him argue with Dream. They're far enough away and speaking quietly enough that their teammates can't hear what they're saying, but there's no mistaking his tone. Honestly, between the searing pain in his hand and the white-hot anger running through his veins, he doesn't give a rat's ass who sees this.

Dream shoots back, "You know what? You're being a shitty teammate, and I don't know why you can never see past your own damn ego. I hit you. Get over it." He's raising his voice now.

George raises his voice too, mostly to hide where his voice shakes from the tears that have started to pool in his goggles. "How hard could it *possibly* be to just watch where you're—"

"*Boys!*"

They both look over to where Coach is stalking across the pool deck towards them. "Both of you, shut your mouths. Get back to the wall. *Now*."

George turns and tries to swim over to the rest of the team, but when he takes a stroke, the blinding agony in his hand makes him inhale sharply, getting a lungful of pool water. He chokes and stops in his tracks, coughing and hacking and trying to breathe normally, but all he can manage are

shuddering gasps. His eyes are half-underwater with the way his goggles have filled with tears, and he would almost find it funny if it didn't hurt so fucking much.

"What—" the coach suddenly spots his hand, which is already turning purple and starting to swell. "Jesus Christ, Davidson. Go to the trainer. Dream, take him to the trainer."

From behind him, Dream swims over and pretty much drags him to the steps. His breathing is ragged and uneven, and he's crying so hard he can barely see, but he still manages to swat Dream's big annoying hand away the moment he staggers out of the pool. He somehow makes it to the door and across the hall to the trainer's office. It's freezing cold out there, and he's barefoot, dripping pool water all over the floor. God, it's like fucking knives are stabbing into his hand. The trainer (Tom? Josh? Rob? George can't tell which one it is through his fogged-up, waterlogged goggles) is eating a sandwich when he comes in. He's sure he looks a mess—he's struggling to breathe, his hand is getting more swollen by the second, and he's still wearing his cap and goggles.

"Um, hi. Let me—" Tom/Josh/Rob stands up, putting his sandwich down hurriedly. "What happened? Are— are both of you hurt, or just you?"

From behind him, Dream says quietly, "I'm fine. I'm just bringing him over."

"Okay, good. Can you please go get his towel—and your own—and his water bottle, if he has one."

George doesn't turn around, but he hears wet footsteps leaving the trainer's office and going back in the direction of the pool. The trainer gestures to his cap and goggles. "Can you— We should probably take those off."

George reaches to pull off his goggles, then cries out when he tries to use his hand again and the movement sends fire up his arm and into his throat. (You would really think he would have learned from earlier, when he tried to swim with it.) "Let me," the trainer says, and rough, dry hands are pulling off his goggles, and the tears and pool water spill onto the floor. He can finally see that it's Tom, not Josh or Rob, and Tom pulls off his cap as well, and now he's just standing in the middle of the trainer's office shaking and sobbing out loud.

Dream comes back, and he and Tom talk in low voices to each other. George strains to catch what they're saying, but he can't hear much over his own gasping sobs and the blood roaring in his ears. Then Dream's pulling a warm, dry towel around his shoulders, and guiding him to sit down. Dream uses a corner of his own towel to dry off George's neck and face, and firm hands smooth through his hair. He's still crying and taking ragged, uneven breaths, but he's stopped sobbing, and he feels more like he can breathe now. He uses his good hand to wipe clumsily at his eyes.

"See, you're okay." He's never heard Dream speak in this tone of voice before. "You're gonna be alright. Here, drink some water."

A bottle is pressed into his hand. He tips it towards his mouth, gulping down as much as he can, and promptly chokes.

"Hey, hey, small sips," Dream admonishes, pulling the bottle away from his mouth. "Ready to try again?" This time, Dream holds the bottle to his lips, giving him a tiny bit at a time.

As the trainer comes closer and starts examining his hand, Dream's warm hands stay on him, rubbing warm, soothing circles over his back until his breathing is more or less back to normal.

Mercifully, Tom doesn't prod at his hand much, just looks at it for a minute or two and then

shrugs. "I can't do anything for you, kid. You're gonna need an X-ray."

"I'll take him to the hospital," Dream says, and then those same hands are pulling him to standing and guiding him over to the locker room.

"You okay? You've gone a little quiet on me." If George didn't know better, he would say that Dream sounds *shy*. But the brash American is never shy, George knows that. He must be pretending, for— for personal gain or something.

"I don't need you to take me to the hospital." George tries to sound firm, but his voice comes out rough and croaky, and any dignity he might have had is ruined when he sniffles at the end of his sentence.

Dream barks out a humourless laugh. "What, you're gonna drive yourself? With that?"

George glances at his hand, which is now inhumanly big (so, almost half the size of one of Dream's hands) and has turned a lovely shade of bluish-purple. "Well...."

"George." Dream's voice softens. "C'mon, it's the least I can do."

He sighs. "Fine."

They change in silence. George does fine one-handed with his pants, but the shirt is a little trickier. He's standing there, shirtless, wrestling with the fabric, when Dream is ready to go. "Here, let me."

"No— Piss off, idiot. I'll do it myself."

"George."

He lets Dream gingerly guide his bad hand through the sleeve, then he pulls it over his head. *Thanks*, he thinks about saying, but the word gets stuck in his throat.

"Jacket?" Dream asks, and George shakes his head.

"Won't be able to get my hoodie on over my hand."

"Don't be stupid," he's scolded. "It's January, you'll freeze." Dream pulls his swim team parka, the one that says *DREAM* across the back, out of his locker and drapes it across George's shoulders. "There."

The jacket is soft and surprisingly warm, and it smells like... George isn't exactly sure *what* it smells like. He's sure that if he got up close to Dream, this is exactly what he would smell like too. It's not terrible. It's, like, okay. He guesses. Like, it doesn't smell *good* or anything, but also, he wouldn't be upset if he was, like, forced to smell it more often. Or something like that.

He doesn't tell Dream this. In fact, the whole car ride is silent. George notices Dream opening his mouth to say something a few times, but he always changes his mind at the last second.

Neither of them says a word as they arrive at the hospital, park, and find the check-in. Dream does most of the talking, explaining what happened and giving George's full name and date of birth when they ask. (How does he know? Stalker.) He tunes out as Dream answers question after question from the receptionist, jolting back to reality when Dream puts a steady hand on his shoulder and guides him to a chair.

George doesn't know where to put his hand, where he can rest it without too much jostling. He'd

been hoping the pain would start to fade, but he seems to be stuck with it for the time being. Dream really did hit him hard. The strange bruising on his hand is at its darkest right in the centre of his hand, the point of impact. This is a terrible time to get hurt. The championship meets are less than three months away, and he's the fastest swimmer on the team. He can't afford to slow down for a second. Fuck, what if they tell him he can't swim? What if they make him take six weeks off? What if they tell him he'll never swim again?

Dream notices immediately when his eyes start to well up again. "Hey, what's wrong?"

He sniffs, blinking the tears away before they have a chance to fall. "My season," he whispers. "What if my season's over? It's not just gonna be a bruise, I can tell. What about districts? Who will take my spot in the relay? What about states?"

Dream laces his fingers through George's (his good hand, obviously). "Well, I can't tell you what's going to happen. But what I can tell you is that you'll be able to handle it, no sweat."

George turns and squints up at the boy next to him. "No sweat?"

"Maybe a little bit of sweat," Dream concedes. "But you're the toughest guy on the team. They make you take time off, you'll probably spend your extra time studying technique and come back even better. And if they stop you from being on the relay, you become the best-looking cheerleader in the school."

George rolls his eyes, but instead of fighting back tears, he's fighting back a smile. "I would make a good cheerleader," he reasons. "I've got the bone structure for it."

Dream scoffs, and they sit in comfortable silence for a few minutes.

(Well, as comfortable as one can be after being brutally disfigured by one's teammate and nemesis. George thinks the pain is starting to get to him. That's the only reason he lets Dream keep holding his hand.)

Dream suddenly breaks the silence. "I wanted to say..." George looks at him, and the sincerity in his face takes his breath away. "I'm really sorry. For... earlier, and stuff. I didn't know I hurt you, and whether I hurt you or not, I was pretty rude, and I'm just—" he gestures weakly to George's battered hand. "I'm just sorry."

"Dream," he says quietly. "...Dream, I'll never forgive you as long as I live. Every breath until my last will be spent trying to exact my vengeance upon you."

"George, I'm being serious."

"Serious," he muses. "Like Sirius Black." He giggles, then leans his head to rest on Dream's shoulder. "My hand hurts. And 'm tired."

Dream sighs. "I know. It's been a long day." That big, warm hand suddenly leaves his, and he's about to complain, but then Dream's arm is around his shoulders, and this is much better anyway. (It actually does jostle his injured hand for a second and he has to bite back a yelp, but the comfort and warmth it provides is worth a little bit of pain. Besides, the soothing sound of Dream's breathing is starting to lull him to sleep, and at least when he's unconscious, it won't hurt anymore.) He lets himself relax into Dream's arm, soaking in the warmth as the chatter of the waiting room slowly fades away.

The next thing he knows, he's laying down on something soft and his arm is a lot heavier. It still hurts, but nowhere near as much as it did before. He blinks his eyes open, groaning at the blinding

light.

“Hey, sleepyhead,” Dream’s voice says.

George would glare at Dream if he were any less tired, but since he can barely open his eyes, he just blinks wearily up at him. He tries to ask him a question, but what comes out sounds closer to gibberish than any real words.

Dream, who is starting to come into focus now, seems to understand the meaning, even if he didn’t understand the words. “We’re in your house now, on the couch. What’s the last thing you remember?”

“Waiting room,” he mumbles.

Dream nods. “You were pretty sleepy, and then they gave you some pain meds, so I’m not surprised you don’t remember anything after that. You were pretty out of it.” Is Dream *blushing* right now? George hopes it’s just a trick of the light, and he didn’t do anything weird at the hospital, and there’s no reason to blush. Oblivious to his thoughts, Dream continues. “But, uh, they took us back and took an X-ray of your hand, and you have a moderate transverse fracture in your third metacarpal. I’m not exactly sure what that means, but basically, you broke your hand. They put a cast on you—I chose blue, I hope that’s okay—and you have to wear it for two weeks. When you get it off, they’ll go over a recovery plan with you.

“I know that’s a lot of information, but I typed it out and texted it to you, so you have it on your phone. Oh, and your phone is here. I asked Sapnap to grab your backpack from the locker room and drop it off at home for you, so all of your stuff is here. They also gave you some painkillers and said that you should definitely take one before you go to bed, so you should probably do that now in case you forget.”

He blinks. Dream’s right; that is a lot of information, especially for someone who just woke up. Still feeling like something the cat dragged in, he struggles into a seated position. “Okay,” he says, his voice coming out raspy and weak.

Once Dream has gone off towards the kitchen, he looks around at the living room. The clock in the corner reads 2:23 A.M. *Jesus*. Just like Dream said, his backpack is there, slumped against the leg of the coffee table. On the tabletop above it, his phone lights up with a notification, and *wow*. He has a lot of notifications, most of which are texts from teammates asking if he’s okay. His heart warms at the sight, and he sets his phone back down, resolving to reply later.

Seconds later, Dream reappears with a pill and a glass of water and hands them both to George, who takes the painkiller and gulps the water down gratefully. He smiles. “Better?”

George nods. “Loads.”

“Are you going to be okay for the rest of the night? I don’t want to hover, so if you’re good to go to bed, I’ll leave you to it.”

“Yeah, I’m good. I’m going to go to bed now. Thank you for everything.”

Dream returns George’s shy smile. “It was no problem. See you around?”

“Not if I see you first,” George jokes, and the last thing he sees is Dream rolling his eyes fondly before the door swings shut behind him. He sighs, far too tired to untangle the complicated threads of what today (technically yesterday, but whatever) means for their rivalry.

(He's not even going to *consider* thinking about the other things complicating their enemies-only relationship, namely, New Year's Eve and the locker room Incident.)

He's about to crawl into bed, having changed his clothes and brushed his teeth, when he decides he should probably update his friends a little bit, even if he doesn't have the energy to respond to all of their texts. He retrieves his phone from the living room, opens Snapchat, and takes a quick selfie in the kitchen light. His face is twisted into an expression of disgust, and he's holding his cast up so that it's visible in the photo. He taps out a caption:

Dream broke my hand pls send him death threats :/

Once the post is up on his Snapchat, he heads upstairs to bed, taking his phone with him. The last thing he does before going to sleep is add Dream to his private story. *After all*, he reasons, *I can't be, like, talking about him behind his back. It's only fair that he should see what an idiot I think he is.*

Chapter End Notes

wassup homeslices here she is. chapter 2. you can look for chapter 3 next saturday/sunday, that's when im planning on posting it. this story will have fairly regular uploads, with a new chapter every weekend !!

thanx for reading this. if ur enjoying the story so far, tell ur friends about it! if you're NOT enjoying it, tell ur enemies about it or something lol i think that would be funny. anyways. kudos pls. it's free and u dont need an account, just the kindness in ur heart.....

also, pls use the comment section down below to shower me with compliments otherwise i will become sad and stop writing... this IS a threat. (that said, i did already write this whole thing mostly, so u don't have to worry about me discontinuing it.) but yea! tell me what you liked, tell me what you didn't like, tell me what you ate for breakfast today. commenting lets me know you're there and you want me to post the next one !! so.

yep love u guys see u next week xoxo goose

hi, i'm goose! check out my [twitter](#) if you're looking for fic updates, extra scenes, and/or me being a toxic dnfer on a daily basis :)

Told You So

Chapter Summary

“You know what they say about, uh, about big feet.”

George’s mouth drops open.

“I mean,” Dream continues, barely holding back his laughter, “you would know.”

“Dream,” George hisses, smacking his arm. “Shh! You’re so loud!”

“So? It’s not like there’s anyone else in here.”

He looks around, and... oh. Everyone else is gone. They’ve been talking for so long that it’s just the two of them in the locker room. Again. George has a bad feeling about where this is going.

Chapter Notes

heyyyy it’s here!!! and it’s nsfw. so read the tags, lower your brightness if you’re in public, and enjoy ;)

also yes the spellings are british. sorry, it’s george’s fault, not mine.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Something’s different.

George can tell that something is different. What he’s not sure about is exactly what has changed.

It starts on Monday, when his phone pings and he glances at the screen to see something he’s rarely seen before: a Snapchat from Dream.

It’s nothing crazy, just a reply to his private story. George had posted a photo of his cat, Button, gnawing on his shoelace with a crazed look in her eyes. *Wyd?* he had captioned it.

georgecore, Dream says.

George sends back a simple ??????

it’s you chewing on your goggle strings at practice, Dream explains.

George rolls his eyes and scoffs out loud. *I do NOT do that, don’t even lie right now.*

suuuure... Dream says. George leaves him on read.

At first, he thinks it’s just an isolated incident. But later that day, when he’s at school, he posts a photo of a kid in his calc class watching a Minecraft video on his school laptop, captioned *Caught*

in 4k.

Barely a minute later, Dream swipes up on it with a question. *what's your problem with minecraft? i think minecraft is pretty pog.*

George doesn't reply, just posts on his private story, *Annoying Kid won't stop messaging me. Just left him on open AGAIN.*

He waits eagerly for the reply, and sure enough, another notification appears on the top of his screen. Dream's message is short and sweet. *wtf?*

Oh, my private story knows ALL about you, he replies. *You have to admit, Annoying Kid is a pretty accurate name.*

WTF?! george,,, that is the shittiest name you've ever come up with. i am embarrassed on your behalf. to think that your entire private story has had to watch you refer to me with this lame, uninspired nickname...

George snickers, drawing a few curious glances from his classmates. *Well sorry, Idiotic Fuckwit just doesn't have the same ring to it :/*

GEORGE you are so problematic omg. cannot believe you've been talking shit about me behind my back this whole time.

Well there wasn't exactly a shortage of things to complain about.

When the next Snapchat rolls in, it's a picture, not a chat. Dream has taken a selfie and drawn a frown over his mouth and tears on his cheeks. *ur making me sad,* the caption reads.

You're making me gag, George promptly replies. Dream leaves him on read.

George doesn't go to practice that day—he's officially banned from swimming until he gets his stupid cast off—but it's somehow not a terrible day, because this back-and-forth is strangely entertaining. It keeps going all week. Every time George posts something, Dream sends him some snarky little quip about it, and the next thing he knows, they're Snapchatting anyway, with no story post to start the conversation.

George is no stranger to bickering with Dream, but their in-person interactions tend to deteriorate pretty quickly from subtle digs and mind games to flat-out arguing. Online, however, their conversations stay lighthearted, until George isn't sure it even counts as fighting anymore. It's dangerously close to something entirely different.

Not that George enjoys it at all. When his heart jumps at each notification, it's out of irritation. When he giggles to himself, he's laughing *at* Dream, certainly not with him. It's fine that they're spending so much time talking. He's just... securing his position as Dream's nemesis. After all, with Dream being the one to drive him to the hospital on Saturday, people might start to mistake them for *friends* or something equally unfathomable.

Life without swimming is surprisingly tolerable. It's a nice change of pace, considering how busy the rest of the season has been. He's got loads more time to do his schoolwork, go on runs, lift with his good arm, and research new ways to improve his technique. George is nothing if not dedicated, and he's not planning on wasting a minute of this break. (Well, maybe he can waste a *tiny* bit of time talking to Dream.)

He's still counting down the days until he can get back in the pool, but in the meantime he's

enjoying the extra freedom. After all, being upset about his injury won't heal it any faster. It's just not constructive to worry about things he can't change. As much as he wishes it was.



Walking into practice the Monday after he gets his cast off is the best feeling in the world. The smell of chlorine stings his nose, but he revels in it, inhaling deeply. His teammates stop to welcome him back and catch him up on all the drama he missed, and he's never been so glad he's a swimmer. He's not out of the woods—he doesn't even know how swimming on his arm will feel yet—but it's hard to care when Karl is twirling him in a circle and Sapnap is laughing so hard he falls in the pool fully clothed.

When he walks into the locker room, he has to smile at the familiar sight. Dream is standing at his locker, right beside George's own, and talking to another Sophomore about a history test they just took.

"Hello, Dream. How have your last two weeks been?" He fakes politeness. (They do this sometimes. It's kind of exciting to pretend to be normal teammates instead of nemeses every once in a while.)

"Great. I was very busy. Doing lots of stuff."

George nods patronisingly. "So, no bitches?"

"What— You— I—!" Dream splutters. "I have *so* many bitches. I need an *excel spreadsheet* to keep tabs on all my bitches."

"Sure, you do." He pats Dream's shoulder.

The locker room seems to be holding its breath, waiting for catastrophe, but George just smiles, adds a tally mark under his name, and starts to change into his suit. He's not sure why everyone is so tense until he remembers the last practice he was at: the one where Dream broke his hand, they screamed at each other, and then George cried like a baby in front of the whole team. Whoops.

He stifles a laugh. Whatever happened two weeks ago, it's still just him and Dream. They're not going to, like, kill each other or anything. Probably. Hopefully.

George only lasts through an hour of practice. From the beginning, it's kind of terrible. Going back to swimming after a break is always a little awkward, but today George's arms are lead, his lungs are burning, and his legs might not even be attached to him anymore. Mercifully, he can't feel his hand injury at all, at least at the beginning. But by the time they get to the main set, it's starting to ache again.

"The pool stinks today," he complains halfway through the set. It does—it smells like grass and dirty shoes. The football team must be doing water-aerobics in the evenings or something.

“That’s because you’re in it,” Dream shoots back without missing a beat.

“Ha, ha. You said urine.”

Dream ignores him.

Ten minutes later, his hand is only getting worse, shooting pain up through his wrist and forearm with each stroke. It isn’t unbearable, but he knows that if he wants it to heal as soon as possible he’ll need to baby it a little. Reluctantly, he pulls his goggles off and lifts himself out of the pool.

“Coach, can I...” he waves his hand vaguely in the direction of the locker room.

“Sure, don’t overdo it. You did alright today.” From Coach, this is high praise. George is gathering his stuff into his equipment bag when Dream gets back to the wall. He looks up at him curiously, brows furrowing in a silent question. *You okay?*

George smiles to show that everything is fine. To his astonishment, Dream returns his smile and gives him the tiniest wave before he pushes off to start his next lap.

When he goes to hang up his netbag on the wall of hooks, Dream and the rest of the team have finished their lap. “Thank God he’s leaving,” Dream says loudly, and it echoes across the pool. “I was really getting tired of the smell.”

“The smell of your own inferiority?” He yells back. “Also, you can’t make fun of an injured person. That’s ableist.”

He turns and walks into the locker room.

That night, his phone lights up with a text from Dream. He opens it and is surprised to see a blurry photo of *himself*, clearly taken from across the pool. Even more surprising is the goggle string hanging out of his mouth. He’s *chewing* on it.

Attached to the photo is a short message, just four simple words.

i told you so.

George is aghast. *Where did you get this picture? It’s clearly photoshopped. It’s clearly fake news. Also, you took this photo of me without my consent. That’s harassment, you’re harassing me. I’m going to sue your sorry ass. Right now.*

just admit that you’re wrong, george. you DO chew on your goggle strings at practice. admit it—you were wrong and i was right.

George will never admit such a thing. Even if it’s true.



George heals quickly. By the time he's been back a week, he makes it through a full practice. He heads to the locker room at the end of practice and is taken aback to see it full of swimmers. *Of course it's full, idiot*, he chides himself. *That's what happens when you stay until the end*. He manages to navigate through the noisy crowd to his locker and throw his cap and goggles on the top shelf.

"Aw, man," Dream says quietly, so only George can hear. "I liked having my space. Now I gotta get used to you elbowing me all the time."

"How do you think I feel? I've had the whole locker room to myself all week, and now I have to deal with all *this*."

"Aw, you think I'm 'all this'?" Dream elbows him in the ribs. "*Georgie*."

"Nevermind, you're incorrigible." Though they're both facing their lockers, George can't help but feel more than a little awkward changing so close to Dream.

"And yet, you continue to encourage me." Dream's voice drops even lower. "So, is it weird to be back?"

George shrugs, too exhausted from practice to be anything but honest. "It's a little frustrating, you know? I was supposed to be spending this part of the season getting faster, not fighting to get back to where I already was." He pulls his sweatpants on over half-dry legs, grimacing at the feeling.

"That makes sense. I'm sorry. Like, really, actually sorry. I don't think I said that before, but this is all my fault."

"It's fine. It... happens, I guess," George concedes. "No hard feelings. Other than the ones I already had towards you, of course." It's finally safe to turn towards Dream—they've already seen each other shirtless too many times to count.

Dream smirks as he meets his eyes. "Of course. And it won't happen again. I've been working on my technique. My swing is way too wide, that never should have happened. But I'm tightening it up. Train tracks, you know?"

"Train tracks!" George laughs. "I remember when I had to think about train tracks."

Dream drags a towel across his torso, wiping water droplets off his unfairly perfect muscles, and they both pretend not to notice the way George's eyes are tracking the movement. "Oh, yeah, I'm sure you had that mastered by the time you were six."

"Seven," George corrects, before he registers that Dream is being sarcastic. He freezes, head halfway through his hoodie. "Um. I mean—"

“Pfft. You are such a snob,” Dream says, and for the first time, there’s no malice in that statement. Instead it sounds almost fond. “I was literally making fun of you.”

“Well, you’d have them mastered if you just tried at practice.”

Dream huffs. “Don’t give me that. Of course I try. I’m just... not good at letting other people see it. I don’t want them to think I’m a try-hard, or, or that I care too much or something.” He looks down at his feet, and George could swear his face turns a few shades pinker. “I just want people to think I’m good, y’know? That I can do all of this, and school, and deal with everything else, without struggling at all.”

“That’s irrational,” George points out. “Won’t people think you’re better if they see you working hard?”

“I don’t want them to think that I *have* to. I don’t want them to know that I mess up my technique or what a noob I am at swimming.”

“A noob.” George giggles. “What a loser. You’re a novice. A neophyte. An amateur.”

“Yeah, but you know what I’m naturally gifted at doing?” Dream leans in conspiratorially.

George’s eyes widen and he instinctively leans forward too. “What?”

“Your mom.”

George scoffs. “You’re so dumb. You look like an idiot right now.”

“Well, you look like a llama with anger issues,” Dream shoots back.

“Well, you look like a beanpole.” His insults don’t make any sense, but George will be damned if he lets Dream win any contest, no matter how inane.

“Well, you look like a lampshade.”

“Well, you look like a guitar string.”

“Well, you look—” Dream falters. “You look like my mother.”

“Well,” George smirks. “You know what they say.”

Dream frowns. “What do they say?”

“You are what you eat.”

Dream groans, and George adds another tally mark under his name. *Victory*.

They fall back into easy banter, and everything else seems to fall away, as if they’re the only two people in the locker room.

George turns around to use the bench to put his shoes on and stops dead in his tracks. They *are* the only two people in the locker room. “Wait, where did everyone go?”

Dream breaks into wheezing, gasping laughter. “*George*,” he chokes out. “What do you mean? We’ve been standing here talking for like, twenty minutes. *Where did everyone go?* Oh my god, you’re so dumb.”

“That is not my fault, okay? I must not have noticed everyone leaving.”

“Because you adore me and always give me your undivided attention?” Dream asks from behind him.

George continues tying his shoes, refusing to take the bait. “No. Because you’re so difficult to talk to that it takes all of my brain cells to try.”

“Oh, I’m sure.”

He turns around and closes his locker. *Now what?* They’re both changed, so the next logical step would be for them to leave. The problem is, George doesn’t want to go. (It would be... rude. They’re in the middle of a conversation.)

“I’m....” he trails off as he glances up and they lock eyes.

“You’re what?” Dream asks teasingly. Knowingly. George’s eyes flick involuntarily down to his mouth.

“Um, I’m bored of this conversation.” He knows Dream can see right through him.

“I mean, I know something else we could do. If you’re bored.” Dream grabs him by the waist, pulling him in so they’re only inches apart.

All the voices in George’s head are screaming at him to *stop, run away, you hate him*, but he closes his eyes and pulls Dream down into a kiss. It’s warm, and soft, and tingly.

Okay, he knows that objectively, on paper, it might look like George enjoys kissing Dream, maybe even likes his company, but that could not be further from the truth. In reality, they’re mortal enemies, sworn to hate each other for all eternity. This just... isn’t reality. How could it be when Dream’s lips are lighting him up from the inside out?

George is sure he’s in a parallel universe, or dreaming, or something. Any second he’s going to wake up and everything will be as it should. Until then... he might as well enjoy it, right?

When Dream’s mouth leaves his and starts to drift down, he tangles his fingers in his wet, blonde hair and pulls. (Dream’s reaction to that will never get old. It’s going to be George’s secret weapon till the day he dies.) He tries to feel triumphant, but it’s hard to feel anything but Dream’s tongue, hot and wet on his neck. Cool air blows across the spot, and George shivers.

“Your neck tastes like chlorine,” Dream says. (He doesn’t sound like he minds.)

“Well, I just swam in a chlorinated pool. What were you expecting it to taste like? Starbucks?” He can’t hold back a giggle as he deepens his voice and puts on an American accent to say, “When he doesn’t taste like a venti iced caramel macchiato with sweet cream cold foam....”

Dream pulls back, and he’s laughing too. “When you start sucking on your daily Mocha Cookie Crumble Frappuccino and he just tastes like pool water....” He goes back to his task, lips on George’s neck like he does taste like a Mocha Cookie Crumble Frappuccino after all.

“*Dream.*” George tries to keep his voice even, but it’s getting harder and harder to breathe with the way Dream is sucking on his neck. Fuck, he’s probably going to leave a mark. “Cut it out with the hickies,” he groans. “Sapnap always asks about them.”

Dream laughs, pulling back and pressing a chaste, fond kiss to George’s lips. “Just tell him you

burned yourself on someone else's curling iron again."

"Ugh, shut up." Their lips meet again, and George wastes no time in getting his tongue into Dream's mouth. He's still pretty new to all of this making out, but he can tell he's doing okay by the way Dream's hands tighten on his waist. He pulls Dream's hair tighter, and Dream groans into his mouth. Something hot swirls in George's stomach. (Probably just an oncoming fever. He should check his temperature when he gets home.)

To distract himself from the fire running through his veins, he slides his hands up Dream's shirt, clutching at the smooth skin he's stared at for longer than he would care to admit. "So *hot*," he mumbles without thinking.

He half expects Dream to tease him about it, but the American practically melts at the compliment. He bites back a giggle at the new discovery. What else could he do to get a reaction out of Dream? He doesn't get much of a chance to think about it before Dream's stumbling into the bench and sitting down on it, pulling George into his lap.

The bench digs into his knees where they're planted on either side of Dream's hips, but he can't bring himself to care about the bruises that are definitely forming when he has *this*. Dream is under his hands, in his mouth, between his legs, and it's *everything*.

(At least for right now. It's not like this is going to happen again. Because this is a one-time thing. Obviously.)

"Off, off." He tugs at the hem of Dream's shirt, and when it's over his head and discarded on the wet locker room floor, his hands are free to roam wherever he wants. He tightens his grip on Dream's shoulders—if this is just a one-time thing (and it is, it definitely is), he might as well make the most of it while he's got it.

Make the most of it. How does he do that? It couldn't hurt to... mess with Dream a little bit, could it? Before he can talk himself out of it, he braces himself on Dream's shoulders and rolls his hips slowly, carefully, into Dream's.

Oh, he was so right: Dream's reaction is instantaneous. George feels the hands around his waist grip impossibly tighter, and with the way Dream's breath catches in his throat, it's obvious that he's holding back a noise. He's gone rigid under George, under his hips. Naturally, George takes this opportunity to take control of the kiss, and he revels in the power that it gives him.

And sure, it feels really fucking good for George too, but he's much more interested in the way Dream practically short-circuited, completely at George's mercy. When it seems like Dream has recovered, George rolls his hips again, harder this time, and Dream lets out a quiet groan into George's mouth.

He's about to do it again when Dream pulls back with a strangled, "George."

He freezes. "Um. Sorry, I shouldn't have—"

"No!" Dream yelps. "No, it's fine, it's good, it's fucking amaz— um. Ah, I mean, it's...okay. You can keep going."

When George hesitates for another moment, Dream's hands slide up under his shirt, pulling him back into a messy, desperate kiss. It's all-consuming—Dream's lips are hot and demanding against his own, his hips grinding down into Dream's lap, and his ears are filled with Dream's groans. Somewhere in the back of his mind, it occurs to him that this is his first time doing this—or

anything close to it—but he’s acting on instinct at this point.

(Well, half of his instincts. Namely, the ones that say *yes yes ohmygod* and *more more more*. He is conveniently ignoring the ones saying *what the fuck is wrong with me why am I sitting on Dream’s lap*.)

Suddenly, rough hands leave his back to slide up the front of his shirt, over his chest. Dream runs a thumb over his nipple, and he gasps, jolting at the unexpected feeling. He feels Dream’s grin against his lips, and it sparks a flicker of irritation in his chest.

Fueled by his annoyance, he wrenches Dream’s head back and starts ruthlessly sucking a mark onto his neck. It’ll be fun to be able to look at Dream and see the evidence that they were here, that this happened. It’ll be even more fun to watch Dream flounder when his lanemates ask him about his *hickey*.

He remembers earlier, how Dream reacted to his words, and he has a terrible, fantastic idea. “You’re so hot like this,” he mumbles into Dream’s neck, sliding his hands down to his bare chest, and Dream fucking *whimpers*. Oh, he is definitely not going to use this power for good.

“Fuck, George. Your fucking— *ah*,” (George grinds down again just to make Dream stutter), “your fucking *mouth*.”

A hot spark of something George chooses not to label shoots up his spine, and it’s enough to spur him on to do what he’s been thinking about for longer than he’d like to admit. He pulls back from Dream’s neck and slides his legs off of the bench, not missing the way Dream chases the contact before he opens his eyes, giving George a look like a kicked puppy. The expression melts away as soon as George makes his intentions clear, sinking to his knees on the floor and settling in between Dream’s legs. (He’s pretty sure he hears Dream gulp. It’s delightful.)

He slides a hand into the waistband of Dream’s sweatpants, running the backs of his fingers along warm skin. He feels the taller boy shiver under his hands, gazing down at him in disbelief. (George can hardly believe it himself, honestly.)

He figures he shouldn’t just start stripping Dream without giving him a chance to back out, so when he starts to tug his pants down, it’s gentle and slow. Dream helps him, kicking the fabric off like it’s burning him. He pulls down Dream’s boxers, too, and Dream cringes as his bare skin connects with the bench. (Gross. George will have to bleach that bench or something later.)

Oh god. Dream is *hot*. He’s never done anything like this before, but he really, really wants to. He tries not to look too eager as he leans forward and finally takes Dream into his mouth. (He’s definitely not thinking about the feel of it, the weight, and how it’s kind of... nice between his lips.) Carefully, he takes a little more, swirling his tongue around the head. Dream moans, like actually *moans*, and he can’t help but snicker (which is surprisingly difficult with his mouth, ah, occupied).

“Shut— *oh my God*—the fuck up,” Dream gasps out, and when George laughs around his dick again, he thrusts his hips lightly, making George choke and pull back, coughing at the burn in his throat.

He glares at Dream. “Dick.”

“I mean, I *told* you to shut up, so....”

George raises his eyebrows, trying not to smile. “Do you want me to stop? I can stop,” he offers,

leaning back as if he's going to leave. (He won't. Not without another taste.)

"No! I mean, uh—" He cuts off when George starts giggling. "You suck."

George shrugs, leaning forward again. "I mean, if you insist." And then he wraps his lips around it and sucks, *hard*. Dream's hands fly to the edge of the bench to steady himself.

His initial plan was to see what Dream reacted to and then do more of it, but unfortunately, Dream isn't being very cooperative. Dream's white-knuckled grip on the bench and the way his mouth is clamped shut make George think he's trying to stop himself from moving or making noise, which won't do at all.

(To be fair, it's probably at least partially George's fault—maybe laughing at Dream for moaning a second ago wasn't his brightest idea. He'll just have to try a bit harder if he wants a reaction.)

George has never been one to back down from a challenge, so he redoubles his efforts, determined to pull *something* out of Dream. Luckily for him, Dream is starting to struggle, if his shaking thighs and stifled groans are anything to go by.

He brings a hand up to grab closer to the base, where his mouth can't reach. His tongue brushes over a spot that makes Dream jolt, so he focuses on it while his hand slides and twists, and Dream finally breaks.

"Fuck— *ah*, George, please—*George*."

Dream is in the palm of his hand now, gasping moans escaping him with George's every move. It would be hilarious if it wasn't so ridiculously, stupidly hot.

"Fuck, right there, I— *Oh my God*." Like, *so* hot. It's getting harder and harder for George to pretend he isn't insanely turned on. (But he is, and holy shit, he might like this as much as Dream does. It would be a crime for Dream to sit there looking like a fucking Adonis and *not* have his dick halfway down George's throat.)

He's gaining confidence now, picking up speed, and Dream is practically writhing on the bench. His blonde hair is a mess, falling into his eyes as he looks down at George, who looks back at him with wide, innocent eyes. He speeds up the movements of his hand just to see Dream's eyes squeeze shut as his mouth drops open in a silent cry.

"George," he gasps. "George, I'm gonna—"

George doesn't let up, and seconds later, Dream is coming in his mouth, hot and salty. He knows it's supposed to be gross, but he's swallowing before he can think to be embarrassed about it. Dream groans and shakes his way through it, and then George pulls away and the weight of his actions fully dawns on him.

What the fuck. What did he just do? They were just having a conversation, and then George was on the floor with Dream's dick in his mouth. Jesus Christ, what is wrong with him? Why does he keep doing stuff like this? He literally had his first proper kiss less than a month ago. (Sure, he'd kissed a few people before that, but... nobody's ever kissed him the way Dream does.)

Dream is panting on the bench, legs still shaking (he tries not to feel *too* proud of himself), and George stands up on slightly sore legs. He grabs his backpack and moves towards the door, ignoring Dream's confused expression (and, you know, the fact that he's so hard that it's painful. It's fine).

“That was quick,” he teases. His voice betrays him, coming out raspy and wrecked. He hopes Dream doesn’t notice. “See you tomorrow.” The door swings shut behind him.



Dream is already waiting behind the lanes when George walks out of the locker room the next day. “Gross, *George* is here,” he says to Sapnap, who rolls his eyes.

“You guys are so annoying. You know, Dream, you’re the only person on the team that has a problem with George.”

George snickers. Dream is so disagreeable and annoying, while George is universally liked. Dream is so far in the wrong, George almost feels bad for him.

“Don’t you laugh, George. You’re the only person in the *world* that doesn’t like Dream.”

What? *No*. Debilitating, crushing betrayal floods George’s heart. “*Sapnap*,” he gasps. “How could you— I thought we were, I thought we were friends.” He presses a hand to his chest. “Sapnap, you’ve betrayed me. And I know that you’ll never feel sorry for the way I hurt—”

“Shut up, George!” Quackity throws a pack of fruit snacks at him, ending his dramatic recitation of the masterpiece that is Olivia Rodrigo’s “Traitor”.

He picks them up. “Why do you even have these? Where did you even get them? We’re literally about to get in the water.”

“Davidson!” the coach barks from right behind George, making him jump. He snatches the packet out of his hand. “What the hell is this? It’s hard work time, not snack time. I better not see you eating near my pool again.”

The boys wait until the coach walks away before dissolving into giggles. George glares at Dream. “I blame you for this.”

“Wha— Why?”

“I don’t know. But I’m sure if I thought about it, I could figure out why it’s all your fault.”

“He does this all the time,” Sapnap complains. “George, if you don’t cut it out, I’ll give you something you can’t blame on Dream.”

Quackity snickers. “Is there such a thing?”

George is about to disagree, but before he can open his mouth, Sapnap steps forward, shoving him harshly. He stumbles, falling backwards and hitting the water with a stinging smack. When he pops up, his hair is covering his eyes, making him look just as threatening as he sounds. “Someday,” he

swears, glaring at Sapnap, “you’re going to look back and regret this.”



After practice, George elbows Dream in the locker room. “Get your fat stupid ass out of the way, you’re in front of my locker.”

“Aww, George. You think my ass is fat? You’re so sweet.”

“Shut up,” George protests weakly. “You’re an idiot. Your ass is mediocre at best.”

“Uh huh, okay. You can admit you think I’m hot, George. *I think you’re hot.*”

“Gross. I do not think you’re hot. I think you’re... room temperature. Tepid. Lukewarm.” Though they’re being quiet, George feels weird talking like this out in the open. He needs to steer this conversation in a safer direction. “So, um, how was your practice?”

“Very subtle subject change,” Dream jokes, but he indulges George. “It was good. I actually kind of stayed on my pace for once. Coach barely yelled at me all practice.”

“That’s crazy. Sometimes, his paces are so ridiculous. Like, is he expecting everyone to go lifetimes at practice, off the wall?”

“He is, he is,” Dream agrees. “And then he gets mad when nobody hits their paces, and throws the trash can at the door.”

George laughs. “Did– did anyone ever tell you about the time a while back—I think it was my freshman year—that he threw the whiteboard in the pool?”

“*What?* No.”

“It was so funny. He was so angry, though. Fucking Philza—he was this one really fast guy, graduated two years ago—got it out and put it on the side, and Coach threw it back in and was all like, ‘If I wanted you to take it out, I would have asked you to.’”

“No way.”

“Yes way. And this one time, during Hell Week, there was this big snowstorm and nobody was hitting their paces, and he literally opened every single door, and all the wind and snow was coming in, and he threw his arms in the air with the snow and wind swirling around him—” George acts it out, remembering it vividly— “and said, ‘Welcome to Hell. My name is [redacted] and I’ll be your torturer.’”

Dream’s jaw drops. “He has a *name*? I thought it was just ‘Coach.’”

George shakes his head gravely. “No, that’s his real name. Someone called him that once, and he kicked them out of practice.”

“No way. Wait– Did you say *torturer*? ” Dream wheezes, grabbing his locker for support. “That is not real, I refuse to believe that.”

“It is! I’m serious, I’m serious, I’m not even joking. Lemme tell you about last year, when he kicked Sapnap out of practice—”

“He *what*?”

The rest of the chatter in the locker room fades away as George regales Dream with tales of Coach’s antics. Dream reacts the same way to each one, dissolving into disbelieving giggles, and George finds himself telling more and more, just to watch Dream’s face light up with each one. Eventually, he starts changing as he talks, seeing Dream do the same out of the corner of his eye.

“I can’t believe I’ve been on the team for *months* and nobody’s told me any of this stuff before.”

George scoffs. “Probably because nobody wants to tell you anything. ‘Cos you’re an idiot.”

“Oo-kay, sure. *I’m* the idiot. Sorry, you’ll have to remind me—which one of us is wearing two different coloured socks again?”

“At least I have socks. Your nasty big feet probably don’t even fit in socks.”

Dream doubles over, cracking up, and George’s heart skips a beat at the way his eyes crinkle as he smiles (He should definitely be worried about that. What if he has, like, a heart condition or something?)

After Dream has regained his composure, he grins at George. “Hey, George, George. George.”

“*What*, Dream?”

“You know what they say about, uh, about big feet.”

George’s mouth drops open.

“I mean,” Dream continues, barely holding back his laughter, “you would know.”

“*Dream*,” George hisses, smacking his arm. “*Shh!* You’re so loud!”

“So? It’s not like there’s anyone else in here.”

He looks around, and... oh. Everyone else is gone. They’ve been talking for so long that it’s just the two of them in the locker room. Again. George has a bad feeling about where this is going. No, no. He’s not going to kiss Dream. It’s not going to happen.

“So,” Dream repeats, sly smile growing on his face. “It’s not like there’s anyone else in here.” Although it’s the exact same sentence he said a few seconds ago, the meaning is entirely different.

George faces his locker, refusing to make eye contact. “You already said that,” he points out flatly.

“George,” Dream whines, hooking his hand lightly around George’s elbow and pulling him away from his locker. When George turns to face him, he slides his other hand onto George’s waist.

George rolls his eyes. “You’re so annoying.” But as soon as Dream leans down to kiss him, he

forgets to be mad. He's far too focused on the way Dream is pulling him in, holding him as if he's scared he could disappear, connecting their lips like George is a drug he can't quit. Like he wants him. Like he *needs* him. He slides a hand onto Dream's arm and it's thick and solid and warm and George never thought he had a thing for muscles, but, um. He's... starting to re-think that.

George doesn't think he's ever going to get used to kissing Dream. It could be the fact that they're literally making out—Dream's tongue is sliding against his and Holy Fucking Shit he did not know a tongue could do that—or, it might just be a Dream thing. He doesn't think anyone could possibly kiss him like Dream does. Even a peck would probably be this good if it was with Dream. Or a kiss on the cheek. Or the forehead....

Oh, God, he's being so cringe right now. What is happening? What is Dream doing to him that's making him think such embarrassing, not-true-at-all thoughts?

Maybe it's the way Dream's stupid, huge hands are clamped around his waist, or the way his tongue lights George's entire body on fire. Or maybe it's the way Dream is pushing him backwards into the lockers, so strong and sure. It's definitely not the fact that this mouth is the same one that fires insults at him day in and day out, keeping pace with George's banter, winning just as often as he loses. Or that it's the mouth that murmured soothing words in a hospital waiting room, chasing away the pain in his hand.

Determined not to think any more sappy, ridiculous things, George focuses on the kiss, burying his hands in Dream's hair to get more leverage.

Then, Dream is moving down to kiss his neck and pressing a thigh between his legs, (*right there, right there, Jesus Christ*, his brain helpfully supplies), and George sees sparks. He's pretty sure he curses out loud as his knees start to shake, and he presses harder into Dream (for balance, of course). Dream's teeth find a sensitive spot somewhere near his ear, and he can't suppress his whimper.

Dream keeps doing it, keeps licking and biting and sucking at his neck, and he's never felt like this before in his entire stupid life. He might actually have died and gone to heaven. Actually, this is more like hell. It *feels* like hell, when Dream's mouth is torturously hot against him, sending shivers down his spine. Some part of him, far removed from the part that's currently shuddering and gasping and clutching at Dream's hair, pinned against a locker, wonders if he actually did die, because how could anything on Earth possibly feel this good? If he's not already dead, Dream's mouth is going to fucking kill him.

Christ, this is embarrassing. If this was a competition, Dream would definitely be winning right now, and George can't allow that. So he pulls out all of his best tricks, desperate to gain some leverage. His hands are already in Dream's hair, so he pulls them tighter just to hear Dream groan. The sound gives him chills.

"God, fuck, Dream," he pants, "you're—*ah*—so good."

Dream freezes against his neck for a second, and they're just standing there, panting against each other. *He's buffering*, George thinks gleefully. When Dream finally remembers how to speak again, he groans. "Fuck, George, you can't—" and then he kisses him, messy and desperate and so, so good. The force of the kiss pulls George's hips forward, pressing him harder against Dream, and he breaks the kiss for a second, head dropping back with a moan, before their lips are back together.

His reaction doesn't go unnoticed—barely a moment later, Dream's big, stupid, ugly, annoying, strong, powerful hands are on his hips, pushing and pulling and *grinding* him against Dream's leg.

Holy shit. George is going to pass out. There's no way this is real. There's no way this is happening. (But it is. And it feels like he's halfway there already, and he's going to die if this ever stops.) He's barely kissing Dream back anymore, too busy moaning into his mouth and weakly thrusting his hips forward. And then— it stops.

He (involuntarily) lets out a dismayed cry, eyes flying open as Dream pulls away. "Why'd you stop?"

"C'mon." Dream grabs his hand, tugging him over to the bench.

He lets Dream manoeuvre him over to the bench and sit him down (he's weak, okay? And Dream is a sexy, sexy man. Please don't tell anyone George said that). He's sure he looks a mess—face flushed red, lips swollen, eyes glazed over—but he can't bring himself to feel self-conscious when Dream's looking at him with those eyes.

Here's the thing: George is still not sure why Dream interrupted a perfectly good session of face-sucking (and, um, dry humping? He sends a silent apology up to his ancestors) to make him sit on a bench. He's about to ask when Dream sinks to his knees, holding his gaze. Oh. *Oh*. His intention is plain as day, George can see it in his eyes, and he looks so unbelievably sincere that George's heart stutters.

"Is this... okay?"

Yes, yes, please, oh my God, George thinks. "Sure, whatever," he says instead, trying to sound casual. He can tell by Dream's smile that it doesn't work.

His heart is hammering in his ears as Dream carefully pulls down his pants, and then his boxers. He shivers a little as the cold air hits his bare legs, but then Dream's looking up at him and he's shivering for a different reason entirely.

Dream's lips are swollen, his hair is a mess, and he's fucking *gorgeous*. His eyes don't leave George's as he licks a teasing stripe along the underside of his cock. George's mouth falls open in a silent gasp. Dream's gaze is burning, leaving him in ashes, and yet he can't look away.

And then, with no warning, Dream takes him into his mouth and George has to stop himself from coming right then and there, because *what the fuck*. He never would have laughed at Dream for moaning yesterday if he knew that it felt like *this*. He would let Dream break his hand a million times over if it led to this moment, if it led to Dream under him like this. Dream is fucking breathtaking, and he almost wishes he could take a picture, just to immortalise the look on Dream's flushed face.

His mouth speaks without his brain's permission. "You look good with a cock in your mouth."

Dream moans around him, and he feels it *everywhere*. He bobs his head eagerly, and George's head falls back. "*Dream.*"

George loses track of the seconds, loses track of anything that isn't Dream's mouth. Turns out his tongue isn't only good for making out. He has no idea what sounds he's making, what he's saying, he can barely process anything other than the boy on his knees in front of him.

"Dream, fuck, *Dream—*" the words are pouring out of him now— "Holy shit, *please.*" Whatever he was going to say next is lost in the moan that rips out of his throat.

George is losing his mind. This isn't real. That's the only possible explanation for what's going on right now. But no, it must be real, because there's no way he could have come up with something

like this on his own. There's no way he could have imagined the way this feels. The heat shooting through him, all the way up to his scalp and down to his toes, is something he would never even dare to dream of.

How did this happen? Sure, he's kissed Dream before, and he's even done *this* to Dream, but it's still unbelievable that Dream is doing it to him. Dream, his mortal enemy, is literally sucking his dick right now. What the fuck.

And he's so good at it, too. Every twist of his hand, every bob of his head, every flick of his tongue has George seeing stars, wondering if he's still breathing. He's starting to regret teasing Dream for coming so quickly yesterday, considering how little time it took Dream to get him to the point where he doesn't think he can hold back much longer.

He's not even sure what he's saying anymore, just choking out a string of words that are probably mostly *Dream* and *please*.

"Dream, Dream, I'm close," he pants, barely getting the words out before another moan overtakes him.

Something burns on the inside of his thigh and he's crying out, muscles seizing as his body is racked by a wave of pleasure. Dream doesn't falter, continuing to suck even after he finishes coming, and he whimpers, each torturous movement of Dream's mouth making the muscles in his stomach jolt.

When Dream finally pulls off, he's not sure whether to feel relieved or disappointed. He wasn't, like, enjoying the pain or anything, actually, so he's definitely relieved. In fact, he doesn't like when Dream touches him at all, so it's totally a relief that he's stopped doing that. Yeah.

Speaking of pain... he frowns, remembering the feeling on the inside of his thigh right before he came. "Did you pinch me? What the fuck is wrong with you?"

Dream shrugs, then stands up. "I mean... you seemed to like it enough."

His face flames, and he can't exactly come up with a response to that when he's still recovering from the intensity of his high, legs trembling and chest heaving.

"Oh, and by the way," Dream says, grabbing his backpack from his locker like it weighs nothing, "your dick tastes like chlorine, too."

And then he's gone.



George, like an idiot, thinks that's gonna be the last time. (After all, they're even now.) But Dream's locker is next to his, and the minute he lures him into a conversation, George forgets

where he is. He gets sucked into Dream's gravitational pull, falling under his evil spell.

(His current theory is that Dream is actually a witch. That's the only logical explanation for George's strange behaviour around him.)

Today, they're talking about bucket lists.

"I'm just *saying*," Dream is... well, just saying. "Why would you *not* want to jump out of an aeroplane?"

"Um, maybe because I value my life," George retorts. (That's not the reason. It's actually because he's a gigantic wimp.)

"This coming from the guy who wants to swim the English Channel. Because that's the life goal of someone who values their own safety. Besides, skydiving is completely safe."

"What's your thing with skydiving, anyway?" George asks. "Like, is there a specific reason?"

Dream squints at him. "What are you expecting me to say right now?" He deepens his voice and traces his fingertip down his cheek to mimic a tear. "Well it all started in my childhood, when my mom died in a tragic skydiving accident. I can't help but want to follow in her footsteps and die the very same way."

George smacks the back of his head with his wet swim cap. It makes a very satisfying *thwack*. "You're an idiot."

"Okay, okay, fine. I think I want to do it for the same reason I like swimming. D'you ever think about flying?"

"No."

"...Okay, well, I do. You know when we swim, we're basically flying. Feet off the ground. I just think that's so *cool*."

George asks, "To fly?"

"To have my feet off the ground for once."

And so, okay, this might not be a particularly normal conversation for 'enemies' to have, but Dream is still his nemesis. It doesn't matter if he gets to see little glimpses into Dream's mind, into his heart, and it doesn't matter that those glimpses never fail to surprise him. They are *not* becoming friends, no matter how much it seems like it. (George knows this because something so unrealistic could never happen.)

And it especially doesn't matter that, for the third day in a row, they talk for so long that they end up being the only two people in the locker room, their conversation only ending when their mouths are otherwise occupied.

When George gets in his car, he sends a text to his mum. *Coach extended our practice times. I'm gonna be coming home late from now on.*

hello!!! i hope you had a good time. next chapter out next sunday probably.

fun fact: did you know ANY person can leave a comment, regardless of whether or not they have an account?? so really there's no excuse not to tell me your favorite part, your least favorite part, and what color your socks are. right meow.

anyways!! i can't wait to see you next weekend in chapter 4 ;) until then

xoxo goose

hi, i'm goose! check out my [twitter](#) if you're looking for fic updates, extra scenes, and/or me being a toxic dnfer on a daily basis :)

Never Have I Ever

Chapter Summary

“What?” Dream pulls all the way back now, face scrunching up in confusion. “We aren’t friends with benefits.”

“What the hell else would we be, then?” He blinks. “Are you saying we’re... more than friends?” Awful, treacherous hope climbs up his throat, even though he doesn’t like Dream like that, he *can’t* like Dream like that, but he can’t help it. He wants to be more than friends. He wants to be more than—

Chapter Notes

it's late, i know! i'm very sorry, and the next one will 100% be on time. this chapter contains alcohol, so. tread with caution. otherwise, just have fun and enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“George, what happened to your knees?” Karl asks one day at practice.

They’re doing starts off the blocks, and George’s bruised legs are on full display. “Oh. Um.” He tries very hard not to glance at Dream, although he can feel green eyes burning into the back of his head. “I... fell.”

“You fell?” Karl echoes.

“Out of a tree.” George smiles convincingly. “Yes. I fell... out of a tree.” He is the very picture of innocence.

“Right. Okay.” Karl turns away, muttering to himself about *filthy lying Brits*.

“Anyways, how was your day?” George pulls off a very smooth and natural subject change.

“It was... good, I guess?” Karl isn’t making eye contact; he’s staring at something over George’s shoulder. George turns to see what’s so interesting, but it’s just Dream and Sapnap chatting. *Weird*. Why would Karl be staring at Dream? He should know that Dream belongs to George.

Wait. No. Dream doesn’t belong to George. He doesn’t belong to anybody, and certainly not... no. George doesn’t even know how his stupid, malfunctioning brain came up with that one. There’s absolutely nothing going on between George and Dream, save for some completely platonic dick-sucking. There’s no emotional connection between them—none at all. Not in the eye contact they make whenever anyone says something funny (Dream just looks stupid when he laughs, okay?), not in the funny texts they send back and forth, and not in their bickering at practice.

George notices that Karl is looking at him expectantly. “What?”

“I asked how yours was,” Karl says. George wracks his brain. What were they talking about?

Dream? “Your day,” he adds, and it sounds like *duh*. Like George is an idiot. Maybe he is.

“Oh. My day was good. Except for the part where I fell out of that tree.”

At the end of practice, George brings his kickboard with him to the locker room. He notices Quackity giving him a funny look so he lifts the board up and waves it a little. “Oh, hey Quackity. I’m just putting my kickboard in my locker so it can dry properly. Can’t have my netbag getting all mouldy, right?”

“Right.” Quackity doesn’t sound convinced, but George just flashes him a winning smile and continues on his way.

He opens his locker and slides the kickboard in the bottom.

“Gee, wonder what that’s for,” Dream teases under his breath. “What are you planning on doing in here after everybody leaves, George?”

“It’s top secret,” George shoots back. “I think it’s necessary, though. Without it, sooner or later someone will look at your legs and look at mine and put two and two together. And I hate the stupid tile floor in here.”

Dream scoffs. “I don’t think anyone could possibly guess that this is happening. It’s like, the most unlikely thing that– well, okay, I guess it’s not the *most* unlikely– just like, something that’s not–”

“Dream. I get it.” Dream does this sometimes, where he corrects himself and stumbles over his words and rambles on and on and on (George does not find it cute. Not even a little). “And everyone else is going to get it as well if you don’t lower your stupid voice.”

“Aw, am I making you nervous?” Dream smirks. “Hey, George, how did you get those bruises on your knees?” he asks loudly. “Was it from sucking too much dick?”

George wants to kill Dream. He wants to push him underwater and keep him there for 3-5 business days. Instead, he sighs dramatically, looking up at Dream. “Yeah, it’s your dad, you know? He’s been having a hard time at work lately; he needs to relieve his stress twice as often.”

“Sounds exhausting,” Sapnap remarks sagely.

George gives him a solemn nod. “It is. But I know it’ll all be worth it when I’m the only name on his will.”

“On his– *What?!*” Dream is scandalised. But he started it, so... he deserves this. “George, what the hell is wrong with you?”

“What is wrong with all of you? I refuse to watch this conversation any longer,” Karl complains. “Sapnap, let’s go.”

The two of them bicker for a few more minutes in the empty locker room, and then George puts his kickboard to very good use.



The last time they get to drink during swim season is in the last week of February, on the Saturday before Sapnap's birthday. Districts isn't for another three weeks, but they know better than to make bad choices any closer to their championship meet. They all know this is their last hurrah. On Monday, they'll buckle down and train hard through states, but tonight, everyone is piled in Niki's basement.

Compared to Niki's New Year's Eve party, it's fairly low-key. The lights are on, the music is at a reasonable volume, and instead of dancing, swimmers are lounging on every horizontal surface. The room is full of chairs, sofas, beanbags, and other miscellaneous furniture that definitely wasn't there last time.

He spends a while drifting around the room, stopping to talk to each group. Dream isn't here yet, which isn't surprising. He knows Dream well enough to know when he's going to be late.

It's been almost a month since George first, uh, got on his knees for Dream. Almost a month of their little routine. Every day after practice, they talk and talk about everything and nothing, and then when everyone's gone, *one* of them gets spectacular, toe-curling head, and the other gets a fresh set of bruises on their knees.

(They always take turns, never go further than one blowjob a day, and never, ever miss a day.)

In this month, the strangest thing has happened. (Stranger than New Year's Eve, stranger than Dream taking him to the hospital, stranger than anything else that has happened so far.) He and Dream have *gotten to know each other*. The time they spend talking every day has created this—okay, it's not a *friendship*, it isn't. It's more of an acquaintanceship...ship. (Is that a word? George resolves to Google "acquaintanceship" when he gets home.) Whatever it is, it's comfortable and amicable and makes George *smile* sometimes, and then he wants to drown himself in the diving well.

Out of everything, the most difficult thing to get used to is *knowing* Dream. And he does know Dream, because somehow, through all those locker room conversations, he's learned his hopes and dreams, his weaknesses, his insecurities, all of his favourite things, and every little idiosyncrasy he manages to hide from the rest of the world. He's memorised his smile, the curve of his jaw, and every freckle on his face. As strange as it seems, he *knows* Dream. (And not just in the biblical sense. Although that is also true.)

And so, when he's at a party and Dream isn't here yet, he knows (because he *knows* Dream, dammit) exactly what happened. Dream is ridiculously time-blind, which means he can know the party starts at 7, and he budgets his time out like this:

Okay, it starts at 7, and it's fifteen minutes away. So, I should leave at 6:45. Well, now that I think about it, there was this one time it only took me twelve minutes to get there. So if I go fast, I could

probably get there in 10. And I'll need to shower, which will take me three minutes, and get dressed, which will take me two minutes. So I should start getting ready at 6:45. Well, nobody goes to a party exactly on time, so I can start getting ready at 6:50.

And then he takes a fifteen-minute shower, ten minutes to get ready, and fifteen minutes to drive here, and he's a half-hour late. He has no idea how long things take him, because he's an idiot, and he needs his mother to tell him what time to start getting ready for things or he'll be super late. This is great and all, except his mother's in Illinois this week on a business trip.

Sure enough, Dream walks in at exactly 7:30 and makes a beeline for George. For once, he smells like soap and not chlorine.

"Oh look, it's my nemesis," George says. On a whim, he sticks out a hand for Dream to shake.

Dream returns his smile. "Oh, it's my archenemy." He gives George a firm, businesslike handshake, and then doesn't let go. Their hands fall between them, still loosely connected.

George studies their hands. "You have some catching up to do, y'know. We've all been drinking since seven." They aren't quite holding hands, but this is definitely not a handshake anymore. Their fingers twine together properly and even though it's a strange thing to be doing, it's oddly comforting.

"Guess I better go see Puffy, then."

"Guess you better." But George doesn't let go, and neither does Dream.

"You alright?" Dream says lightly. "You, uh... had quite a tiring morning."

"Shut up," George scoffs, ducking his head. Dream's right—just this morning, he had one of the best fucking orgasms of his life (even though they're all pretty amazing with Dream there). But that doesn't mean that Dream has to bring it up in *public*.

"Oh yeah? You want me to shut up? You didn't exactly shut up this morning."

"*Stop*." Despite the weird angle, George manages to squeeze Dream's hand. When he winces a little at the pressure, George squeezes even tighter, as tight as he can.

Dream flinches, tugging his hand away, but George holds on. "Ow, cut it out!"

"Feel the pain, idiot. Yeah." George squeezes one more time for good measure and then he loosens his grip. "Yeah. Now you'll think twice before you start annoying me."

George untangles his hand from Dream's and leaves him to go get a drink by himself. He heads over to Minx.

"George!" As soon as Minx spots him, she grabs his arm, dragging him over to the other side of the room. "Come sit. We're just about to play Jenga."

He joins the circle of ten or so people on the floor, leaning back against the furniture they pushed out of the way. Karl and Niki are still setting the blocks up, so he helps them, arranging the little wood pieces into groups of three. It's an old Jenga set, passed down the swim team for years. Each block has something different written on it in faded black sharpie—dares, challenges, instructions—and it's been part of some of his fondest memories on the team.

He plops himself down in a gap in the circle, and Minx squeezes in next to him. A few more

people join the group, and to his surprise, Dream sits down on his other side, wrapping a casual arm around his shoulders. He's not expecting Dream to avoid him, per se, and physical contact between teammates isn't exactly unusual (especially when people are drinking), but it's strange to have Dream touch him when they aren't in a dark closet, or alone in a deserted locker room. Especially since Dream isn't even drunk. In fact, he's barely started his drink (and, um, is that a Shirley Temple?).

Niki goes first, pulling out a block and announcing, "Breaststokers drink."

A few people lift their drinks to their lips, but promptly spit them everywhere when Sapnap asks, "Breaststokers? Or *breast* stokers? 'Cause it depends."

Karl throws a bread roll at him (where did he even get that?), and it hits him square in the mouth.

Niki rolls her eyes. "Guys, *drink*," she says. "Sapnap, you drink too, if you want to keep asking stupid questions." (When she's sober, Niki's very sweet. Unfortunately for Sapnap, she's much less friendly when she's drunk.)

Sapnap rolls his eyes, scooting forward into the middle of the circle. He taps a few blocks before finding one he's satisfied with, then pulls it out and scowls, reading, "Five fingers, never have I ever. Loser has to finish their drink."

Everyone groans dramatically, but they each put up a hand. Sapnap goes first, since he pulled the block. "Never have I ever been on a diving team." About half the swimmers put a finger down, having joined the diving team at their summer league pools growing up.

Tina goes next. "Never have I ever made out with someone."

George considers it, but doesn't put his finger down. He can't risk anyone on the team finding out about his few mistakes with Dream. He knows Dream notices when the hand on his shoulder travels down to jab a sharp thumb into his ribs. He jerks and elbows Dream in the gut.

Next, it's Quackity. "Never have I ever gotten kicked out of practice for calling my ex-girlfriend a slut." The room erupts with raucous laughter, everyone shouting things at the same time.

"That was one time, oh my *God*," Sapnap yells. Karl climbs onto his back and forces him to put a finger down.

Dream's is stupid. "Never have I ever had brown hair." George makes sure to "accidentally" elbow him again as he puts one of his fingers down.

Now it's his turn. Oh, shit. What can he do? Maybe he should target Dream, who only has three fingers left, even though they've barely even started. "Never have I ever called myself 'Dream.'"

Immediately, his declaration is met with loud sounds of protest. "Stop targeting!" Sapnap practically yells.

"That's not even true," Dream adds. "You totally have. Just last week, when you were dancing around the locker room, you said 'my name is Dream, and I'm a little pissbaby.' That counts as calling yourself Dream."

"Pick a new one."

"Fine, fine. Never have I ever stayed in a relationship with someone because I was too scared to break up with them." George levels a pointed look at Minx.

The group bursts into laughter, and Minx scowls. “Well, what the fuck am I supposed to do?”

“Have you tried put-down lines?” Sappnap suggests. Everyone looks at him. “Oh come on, don’t tell me you don’t know what those are. It’s like a reverse pickup line.”

George laughs. “A reverse pickup line? Okay, ready? Ready?” He clears his throat dramatically, standing up. “Hey girl, are you being followed? ‘Cause I’ve been seeing people behind your back.”

The room erupts, and he bows before sitting back down. Minx groans. “Guys, I can’t say that.”

Ignoring her, Karl leaps to his feet. “Oh, I have one! Babe, I think it’s time we take our relationship to the previous level.”

Quackity joins in. “Hey girl, are you a million bucks? Because you’re... not worth as much as you used to be.”

“You could try a poem,” Niki points out. “Roses are red, violets are blue, trash is dumped and so are you.”

“It’s just like they say,” Sappnap reasons. “‘Relationship’ has twelve letters but so does ‘fuck that shit.’”

Silence.

“...Sappnap, literally nobody says that.” Everyone laughs, and George continues. “Anyway, I didn’t see your finger go down, *Minx*.”

Minx rolls her eyes, but she complies before taking her turn. “Never have I ever been ‘friends with benefits’ with someone.”

“That’s because you’re always just dating them,” Puffy comments from behind the bar, and the room erupts with surprised laughter.

George considers it again, but doesn’t put his finger down. It would draw too much attention. He can’t help but glance at Dream to watch him put yet another finger down. To his surprise, though, the blond’s finger stays up. Huh. That’s weird. He doesn’t have much time to dwell on it, because the game continues.

Next up is Foolish, who says, “Never have I ever broken two minutes in the 200 back.”

“That’s because you literally only know how to swim freestyle,” Dream complains, but he puts his finger down anyway. George does too.

“Never have I ever kissed Karl,” Punz snickers. George makes sympathetic eye contact with Foolish as they both put a finger down.

George hopes someone will target Dream. He’s the only one with only one finger left. Or— wait. Sappnap only has one finger left, too. When did he put another finger down?

“Never have I ever been over six foot,” Alyssa declares, grinning over at Dream.

“What the hell,” Dream complains, putting his last finger down and raising his mostly-full cup to his lips. Once he’s drained it, he passes the cup off to Puffy, who goes to get him another. “That was targeting, that’s not even fair.”

The room is so loud, everyone yelling and making fun of Dream, and George leans in to say in his

ear, "You're just mad 'cause you can't hang. 'Cause you're an idiot."

Dream rolls his eyes. "I'm sorry I'm not a party animal like you," he mutters back.

"A *party animal*?"

"Oh, come on, George. You're a total party animal." He smirks. "It's kind of hot, actually. When you drink vodka straight out of the bottle..." he tips his head back and groans out loud.

George elbows him. "You're gross. Shut up."

They share a smile, sitting hip-to-hip in the middle of a crowded room, and it feels like a secret.

"Who's going next? Who's next?" Someone yells all of a sudden, and the room descends into chaos. People are yelling and arguing and doing nose-goes, but Karl jumps to the rescue.

"Guys, it's fine. I'll go." He slides forward and pulls a block from the Jenga tower. When he reads it, the smile slowly fades from his face. "Person across from you can ask you any question. Answer it or drink."

Quackity grins like he's won the lottery. "Karl, Karl, Karl. What should I ask him, guys? What are we thinking?"

"Quackity," Karl pleads.

"You know, here's what I think: why don't you tell us who you hooked up with on Halloween, hm? When you texted me something about the best sex of your life?"

Karl drags a hand down his face. "Get me a shot glass."

"No, no!" George shouts. "Answer the question, Karl, I need to hear this."

"Yeah, *Karl*," Sapnap chimes in with a wolfish grin. "Why don't you share with the class?"

Karl avoids eye contact, turning around to watch Puffy pour his drink instead.

Puffy leans over the back of the couch to hand him the shot glass. "It's Everclear, just so you know." At the horror on his face, she pats his shoulder sympathetically. "You *could* still answer the question, if you don't want to drink that."

Despite everyone's protests, Karl squeezes his eyes shut and downs the shot, coughing as he puts the glass down on the carpet beside him. "Ugh, that was so bad. I hate you," he says to Quackity. "I hope you get 'shotgun.'"

Quackity pulls a block from the tower, looking slightly apprehensive, but his shoulders sag in relief when he reads it. "Every one of you bitches wearing swim team merch, drink up," he announces. "Bunch of unstylish bastards."

"This game is so rigged, oh my God," Dream says. He's wearing a 'DSMP Swim & Dive' crew neck sweatshirt, and it definitely doesn't make him look like a hot, sexy DILF. At all. "I had to drink for the 'never have I ever' one, and now I have to drink *again*?"

George giggles. "Maybe you're just dogwater, Dream. Maybe you just suck."

"Oh, do I now? Well, it looks like we have something in common, if you know what I mean."

George groans at the shitty attempt at an innuendo, giving Dream the most disgusted look possible. “Just drink, loser. It’s your fault for having no style. And hurry up, it’s your turn.”

Dream takes a shot—and it’s just as wimpy as it was on New Year’s Eve—and leans over to pull a block from the tower. When he looks at it, his jaw drops. “You’ve got to be fucking kidding me.”

George leans over his shoulder to see the block, and almost topples into Dream’s lap with laughter. The block has one word scrawled on it in thick black Sharpie: *shotgun*.



George tries to behave himself—he really does—but he can’t stop looking at the door to the closet where he made out with Dream for the first time. Worse, he can see Dream looking at it too. When the group leaves to go play beer pong in the other room, Dream pulls George into a shadowy alcove.

“Hey, baby. You come here often?”

George rolls his eyes. Dream’s sultry tone does not work on him. In fact, it has no effect on him whatsoever. (Neither does the word *baby*, hot and low in his ear.) “Dream, really? We’re at a *party*. Like, two-thirds of the team is in this basement right now.”

“George.” Dream looks at him with those eyes he can’t say no to. He gestures to the closet, which is looking more and more inviting every second. “C’mon, they probably won’t even notice we’re gone. For old times’ sake?”

“Yeah, okay.” He grabs Dream’s wrist and pulls him into the closet. As soon as the door shuts behind them, Dream’s hands are on his waist, pulling him closer. George immediately leans in, and instead of connecting their lips, he starts on Dream’s neck. He registers a *click*, and then the room is flooded with gentle light. Dream has turned the light on. Huh. That’s new.

It’s much softer than the last time they were in this closet together, less frantic. Dream is leaning into the contact, sighing as George trails gentle kisses up his jaw. “You didn’t put your finger down earlier,” he says conversationally.

George doesn’t pause what he’s doing. “Hm?” He finds a spot that makes Dream’s breath catch, and he licks it before moving on, tracing aimless paths over the unmarked expanse with his mouth.

“The... ‘never have I ever made out with someone’ one. But you have. I know that for a fact.”

“Oh? And how do you know that?” George teases, right before his lips find the soft skin above Dream’s collarbone. He presses a gentle kiss there, then sucks on it, and he can *feel* Dream’s heart speed up.

“Oh, shut up. Why’d you lie? Were you just trying to win the game?” Dream laughs.

George pulls back to look Dream in the eye. “Well, Sapnap and Karl know pretty much everything about me, but I haven’t mentioned–” he gestures between them awkwardly so he doesn’t have to say *this* or *us* or something equally heinous– “y’know, and if they saw me put a finger down, they would be like ‘pfft, no you haven’t,’ and then I would have to either lie to them or spill the whole story in front of everyone.”

Dream blinks. “Why would they think that? It’s not like I’m the first person you’ve...” he trails off as realisation dawns on his face. He raises his eyebrows, incredulous. “*Am I?*”

“*Obviously*. Who the hell else would I make out with? You think I just go around sticking my tongue down random people’s throats?” George is suddenly aware of what a mega-virgin he sounds like. “I mean, I’ve kissed people before, but they were all, like, pecks.”

“Wha– I had no idea!”

“How could you not know that? When you kissed me on New Years’ Eve I was literally a limp spaghetti noodle. You *had* to have noticed that I had absolutely no idea what I was doing.” Dream is an idiot. A huge, dumb, gorgeous idiot. A *himbo*, George thinks.

Dream’s shoulders raise in a shrug. “I mean, sure, it was a little weird for the first few seconds, but I figured you were just nervous because then you, like, caught on to what was happening, and you–” He cuts off abruptly and looks away.

“And I what?” When Dream doesn’t respond, he pokes him lightly in the stomach. “And I *what*, Dream?”

“You were, um–” he clears his throat– “*really* good... at it. And at everything else. So I kinda thought you had, like, a lot of experience.”

George feels something like vanity shoot through him. “Oh my god. *Dream*.” He laughs. “At least I know I’m not a bad kisser now. And that you think I’m *reeeeeeally* good at–”

“Oh, shut it. You certainly don’t seem to mind kissing me, either.”

When George’s face flames, Dream seems to regain some of his confidence, leaning in to press kisses to his neck the way George did earlier. “I like it when you blush,” he murmurs into George’s skin, and George wants to kick himself for the way his stomach erupts with butterflies. “Looks nice.”

Instead, he kicks Dream. (Well, sort of. He nudges Dream’s shin with his toe.) “Shut up. Can’t believe you thought I would put a finger down in front of everyone.” His voice comes out a little breathy. Stupid Dream and his stupid lips.

“I still think you should have.” Dream’s words fall hot against his throat. “Cheating at ‘never have I ever,’ what kind of a wimp are you?” In contrast to his harsh words, Dream leaves a sweet, chaste kiss on George’s lips.

George kisses him back even slower and sweeter. “We’ve all got our secrets,” he muses. “Besides, it’s not like you didn’t do the same thing on the friends with benefits one.”

“What?” Dream pulls all the way back now, face scrunching up in confusion. “We aren’t friends with benefits.”

“What the hell else would we be, then?” He blinks. “Are you saying we’re... more than friends?” Awful, treacherous hope climbs up his throat, even though he doesn’t like Dream like that, he *can’t*

like Dream like that, but he can't help it. He wants to be more than friends. He wants to be more than—

“What? No! God, no. Why would you even think— How can—” Dream cuts off with a scoff. “That’s not— Do you— Do you think I *like* you, or something? Because I don’t. At all.”

The harsh words knock the breath out of George’s lungs. He feels as though his heart has dropped through the floor. And, okay, it’s not like he wants Dream to be, like, in love with him (he *doesn’t*, okay?), but he never expected to hear so much horror in Dream’s voice at the idea of liking him. He can’t believe he ever thought they were making progress. He can’t believe he ever thought they were... acquaintances.

“Jesus Christ, Dream,” he spits, hurt making his words come out sharper than he intends. “I already know what an asshole you are, you don’t have to work so hard to prove it to me all the time. It’s not like you work hard at anything else.”

“*What?*” Dream’s face falls for a split second, dismay flooding his features. Then his expression hardens, until the only emotion left on his face is anger. “God, George, I can’t believe that after all this time you still think that. I thought you’d changed, but you’re still the same stuck-up, entitled, selfish person you’ve always been. You just waltz around just making whatever assumptions you want about everyone else. Well, guess what? You’re wrong about this the same way you’ve been wrong about everything else you think about me.”

Wrong about *everything*? Dream needs to get his head checked if he thinks he can get away with making these kinds of baseless generalisations about George. “Don’t you *dare* talk like you know me. You get my dick in your mouth and suddenly think you can read me like a goddamn book. You know what? I don’t have time to waste on a jerk like you. You might be horrified by the idea of being with me, but *plenty* of people aren’t. I’m out of here.” He shoves Dream away, fumbling for the doorknob behind him.

“George, I—” Dream pauses, and his mouth forms several different words before he settles on, “You know what? Fine. It’s not like we’re dating.” His voice turns bitter. “Go ahead, hook up with whoever the hell you want—”

Dream’s voice cuts off as George slams the door behind him.

Chapter End Notes

um, oops. sorry? yeah, no, i’m not even a little bit sorry. i AM sorry that it was so late tho, that will not happen again i prommy. i had my graduation, and i didn't have access to a computer for a while, but. it’s here now. your hearts are breaking (if i did my job right. if not this is awkward). but don’t worry, everything’s looking up next chapter!! (no it’s not i’m just saying that to get you to read it.)

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^if you actually read the chapter notes, pls ignore this, i’m just trying to send subliminal messages to the people who don’t read them.

anyways. friends. thank you for being here, thank you for reading, and i hope you enjoyed. If you did, leave a kudos or a comment to let me know your thoughts and/or your favorite thing to order from panera. the good thing about this chapter being so late is that now you only have to wait *counts on fingers* THREE DAYS for chapter five. that's right, folks. you heard it here first. chapter 5 will be up THIS SUNDAY. see you then. stay fresh, cheese bags <3

xoxo goose

hi, i'm goose! check out my [twitter](#) if you're looking for fic updates, extra scenes, and/or me being a toxic dnfer on a daily basis :)

Starts and Endings

Chapter Summary

“Dream, wait up a minute,” Coach calls, voice echoing around the empty pool deck.

George has to physically stop himself from snickering out loud. Dream is *finally* going to get yelled at for causing problems.

“Davidson, you too.”

Fuck.

Chapter Notes

goggle problems is BACK ☆ with another epic chapter. i don't think there's anything much to warn you about in this one. just gogy being emo ! have a good time & stick around at the end to tell me what you think!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

After school on Monday, George walks into the locker room and Dream's locker is empty.

He stops in his tracks, blinks. Dream's stuff doesn't magically reappear. His towel isn't slung over the door, his backpack isn't spilling halfway out because it doesn't fit, his snacks no longer fill the entire bottom half. It's all just... gone.

He stands there, dumbstruck, until he hears a familiar laugh. *Dream?* He turns around, and... oh.

Dream's standing in the opposite corner of the locker room, laughing and chatting with a few sophomores like absolutely nothing is wrong. He's in front of what used to be one of the empty lockers, but now is packed full of Dream's stuff.

Wait. Did Dream *come in early* to move his stuff into a new locker? Did he skip his ninth period class? George can hardly believe it. Dream must really hate him if he was willing to do that. He's annoyed for a minute, before he remembers that, oh yeah, he doesn't care what Dream does anymore, because they're not friends. He turns back to his own locker, and resolves to ignore Dream. He just... won't look at him.

When they get in the pool, he doesn't look at Dream. In fact, he doesn't even think about Dream. He doesn't think about his snarky little texts, or his muscles, or those secret moments where he slips up and forgets to pretend he's mean. He doesn't think about his smile, or his laugh, or the way he picks at his nails when he's nervous. And he *definitely* doesn't think about quiet evenings in an empty locker room, private moments where it felt like they were the only two people in the world.

Okay, so maybe he thinks about him a little. But he also thinks about Dream's face, red and angry and closed-off, as he scoffed and pretty much told George he was unloveable. He thinks about the way Dream acted as if liking George was the most absurd, disgusting idea he had ever heard.

It's a good thing today's practice is a long one, because George has a *lot* of aggression to work out.

By the time he's done warming up, he's feeling angry. He picks up the paper that Coach gave him at the beginning of practice, and Karl puts a hand on his shoulder as he leans over him, trying to see. He flinches away from the touch, not missing the surprised look Karl gives him. He can't feel anything but irritation. Why won't Karl give him his space today? He turns back to read the set.

When he first started swimming, the ridiculous jargon on the page would have looked like gibberish to him, but after nearly three years on the high school team with Coach, he's practically an expert at deciphering his instructions. Confident in his understanding of the practice, he passes the paper to Karl and leans against the wall, waiting for the set to begin.

Once it starts, he lets himself feel everything. The humiliation, the hurt, but most of all, the anger. He lets his rage fuel him as he tears through the water, finishing lap after lap after lap. His arms and legs ache, his lungs burn, and his stomach churns with the exertion, but he keeps his head down and *swims*.

This is his favourite type of practice—the type where you have to keep going and going and going, and you can't slow down. Most people get tired after enough 100s, but George has so much more in him. He has so much more, and he's willing to give all of it over to the pool. He hands over pieces of himself, 100 by 100, until he leaves his competition in the dust. Besides, he's always liked a little pain. *This* is why he's the best swimmer on the team, *this* is why he belongs in the top lane. Because he has the endurance to push through and stay consistent for hours.

Dream's a sprinter, so he struggles with sets like this. He has enough trouble staying consistent outside of the pool, there's no hope for him when he's in it. George feels his anger build as he thinks back to the party. How dare Dream say that to him? Weeks of talking (and doing other things) to each other, and Dream hasn't learned a single thing about George.

What a piece of shit. George didn't even say anything bad. All he did was ask what Dream saw them as, if not friends with benefits, and Dream completely blew up at him. Because he's a stupid, defensive, heartless asshole. Dream might not like him, that's fine, George won't hold that against him. But he didn't have to be so awful about it. It's almost like he saw George start to soften towards him and just had to remind him, *this is why you hate me*. And George does. He hates him. He hates him. He *hates* him.

"Don't get sloppy, Davidson," his coach scolds him between rounds. "Why are you slapping the water like that? What the hell did it do to you?"

Now Dream is affecting his swimming, too. He pushes off for the next 100, and this time it's clean; precise.

Maybe it's George's fault. Maybe he's an idiot. He was foolish to go around collecting little tidbits about Dream—like he cared, like they mattered to each other. At the end of the day, none of it really meant anything. They were just teammates. Just two strangers who happened to interact.

And it's fine. George is fine. He didn't really like Dream, anyway. He was probably just thinking with his dick or something. Dating him would be terrible, anyway. Downright nightmarish. He doesn't want any of that with Dream. He doesn't want sweet kisses, morning cuddles, movie dates... shit. Fuck. Shit.

He wants that. He really, really wants that.

Maybe if he talks to Dream, he can apologise and tell him not to worry, that he never thought they were anything and he just wants to go back to normal. And he can win Dream over. He can be nice and charming and suck Dream's dick every day instead of every other, and then maybe he'll like him, then maybe he'll want to have him around—

“Guys, what the hell is happening?” Coach yells to the top few lanes. “You’re supposed to be hitting your paces. Dream, what’s wrong with you? You and Davidson have the same pace. If he can hit it, why can’t you?”

George tries to catch Dream's eye the way he always does when Coach says something stupid. Dream and George are different swimmers, of course they aren't hitting the same pace. But the yelling isn't so bad when he and Dream can laugh together about it. To his surprise, when he finds Dream, he's not biting back a smile. He's not even really looking at George; he's staring through him like he's invisible.

Oh. So that's how it is. All of a sudden, he's flooded with an awful emptiness, and it takes everything in him to hold back a wave of tears. It's not even a big deal, really, that Dream is ignoring him, he just wasn't expecting it. Somehow, in a few seconds, he'd forgotten what happened between them. But it's fine. He's fine. He's not going to cry. He's *not*. There's probably just, like, water in his goggles, or something. And the hollow churning in his stomach is just.... He's probably hungry. He should definitely eat more before practice tomorrow, to stop him from feeling this Dream-shaped cavern in his chest.

He pushes off the wall to swim again, but when he tries to breathe, it feels like his lungs are filling up with water. No. *No*. This can't be happening, not here. He accelerates into the wall and pulls himself out of the pool before anyone has a chance to ask him where he's going.

“My hand,” he chokes out as he rushes past Coach, hating himself for the lie but not knowing how to explain the situation to Coach without humiliating himself in front of the whole team.

The second he makes it into the locker room, an ugly sob escapes him. He pulls his thin, scratchy towel out of his locker and wraps it tight around his shoulders, grasping for any kind of comfort he can get. He sinks to the floor in front of his locker, curling up into a ball and crying so hard he can't breathe. The towel gets cold and gross quickly, soaked through with pool water and tears, but it's all he has, so he pulls it even tighter around him, shivering in the cold.

“George?” a voice calls from outside the locker room.

Fuck, George thinks, frantically trying to quiet his sobs before the person comes in.

“George, are you okay? I saw you get out—” Karl rounds the corner into the locker room and freezes for a second when he sees George sitting there on the floor. “Oh, *George*.”

George buries his face in his cold, wet towel again, not wanting to look at Karl. But a few seconds later, he's being hauled to his feet and Karl is trying to take his towel away. He clings to it at first, feeling exposed without it, but then Karl wraps his own towel around his shoulders. It's warm and dry and fluffy, and he brings up a corner to dry George's face, even though the next wave of tears is pooling in his eyes. “Karl, I feel like an idiot,” he chokes out.

“Don't,” Karl tells him firmly. “It happens, okay? I know it's been a couple weeks, but you're still on the road to recovery. Do you want me to grab you some ice?”

George is so confused for a moment that his tears stop entirely. “Ice?”

“Yeah, for your hand.” Karl frowns. “This *is* about your hand, right?”

“Oh, right. My hand. Yeah.” He sniffs, wiping at his eyes. “Er, that’s okay. I’ll just ice it at home after practice.”

“What do you mean, ‘after practice’? Go home now.”

“Now? But—” George waves his hand towards the door, towards everyone outside who expects him to come in every day and give his all— “I can’t just *leave*.”

“George. You’re one of the hardest workers here, no one will fault you for leaving if you’re hurting.”

Hurting, George thinks. *That just about sums it up*. He doesn’t trust his voice to stay steady, so he just steps forward and gives Karl a hug. Well, the best hug he can manage while mummy-wrapped in a towel.

“Are you gonna be okay if I head back out?” Karl asks. “I’ll tell Coach you went home.”

George nods. “Thanks.” He takes a step back and watches Karl go, and the towel wrapped around him slowly unravels and slips off his shoulders. He catches it before it hits the floor.

As he catches the towel, something sort of pinches in his hand. He glances at it, and... oh. It is a little swollen. He was kind of rough on it today. He pushes a thumb into the raised bump on the back of his hand, gasping as the pressure sends a shock of pain through his still-healing bones. Before he can think to stop it, his head floods with memories of that day: Dream hitting him and then shouting at him, Dream’s jacket around his shoulders, Dream’s *arm* around his shoulders.

Suddenly, he scrambles to his feet, practically tearing his suit off in his haste to get dressed. He can’t bear to be in the locker room any longer. All he wants is to curl up in a ball on his bed and eat ice cream. He’s exhausted, he’s hurt, and he feels so *stupid* for trusting Dream in the first place. He rushes to tug on his clothes, barely stopping to dry himself off, and leaves as fast as he can.



Over the next two weeks, George manages to keep his distance from Dream. He doesn’t think he’d be able to handle it if Dream tried to talk to him again, doesn’t think he could make it through a conversation without breaking down again.

Luckily, Dream doesn’t seem to want to talk to him, either, and sometimes, if George tries really, really hard, he can pretend Dream isn’t just in the next lane over. For two full weeks, they don’t say a single word to each other. George is fine with it, really. He just puts his head down and swims; he doesn’t know why he was ever doing anything else.

Over time, he gets used to his new life. It's a life without Dream's laughter; a life where he never gets to feel Dream's touch again. But after a while, it stops feeling like there's a Dream-shaped hole in his chest and just starts to feel like he's always been this hollow.

In fact, he's fine. He's completely over Dream. He has other friends, okay? He can joke around with... Karl, or something, he doesn't *need* Dream's laugh in his life. Everything can just go back to the way it was before New Years, before they ever even kissed. He wishes he could go back to before they even met.

He's fine, though. He is. Except, sometimes he'll look over at Dream and almost crack a joke, and then he'll remember that that's not something they do anymore, and then he gets this kind of sinking feeling. But it's fine. It's fine. Really, it's best for everyone if they just go about their business and ignore each other completely. So George is dealing with it.

Unfortunately, although he is mentally fine with it (completely! 100%!), avoiding Dream takes its toll on George. Going from getting his dick sucked every other day to getting absolutely nothing at all is a change his brain made, and his body hasn't caught up yet. That is to say, he still wants it *all the time*. He can't even wank it away—he tries, but he can't get more than ten seconds in without thinking about Dream. (And he is *not* going to get off to a fantasy about Dream, not after everything he said.)

He tells himself that's the only thing he misses—an outlet for all his sexual urges. He definitely doesn't miss any of their conversations, or the way they would steal glances at each other at practice. He doesn't miss Dream at all. Not even a little.



“Alright, everyone. Siddown. Lots to cover today, so shut up and listen, got it?”

The Monday of the week leading up to Districts, instead of getting in the water at the beginning of practice, they have to go straight to the benches, because Coach is announcing the District lineup.

George is fairly certain he's going to be in his two main events—the 500 free and the 200 free—but he doesn't know what relays he'll be in. There are only three in the entire meet, but George usually ends up in at least one, if not two.

Coach starts going over the girls' medley, and George tries to listen, but it's a little hard to concentrate when he knows that Dream is sitting right behind him. He's a little more focused on trying to ignore the way he can feel Dream's eyes burning into the back of his head. He's not particularly successful. He forces himself to tune back in to hear about the boys' medley relay.

“...Davidson,” Coach is saying, “Quackity, Sapnap, Punz. Make sure you guys get out there, get a good start to the meet. We want to use this event to send a message: we didn't come to mess around. You guys have a job to do. Davidson, I want you getting out ahead of the field. Manburg's

backstroker goes a twenty-four high, so I better see you throwing down out there. Quackity...”

Huh. That’s weird. George isn’t a fan of Dream, by any means, but even he has to admit that Dream has the best 50-yard freestyle on the team, so why the hell isn’t he in the medley relay? Part of him is relieved, though. He didn’t know how he was going to survive doing a relay with Dream, so this makes it easy. Dream’s probably not thrilled, though. He can’t resist the urge to look over his shoulder, and they lock eyes. Dream looks... crushed. George almost feels bad, but then he realises he recognises the look in Dream’s eyes. It’s the same look he saw in the mirror after that night two weeks ago, at Niki’s party. He turns back around. After all, it’s only karma for Dream to feel the way he made George feel.

George tunes in and out over the next few minutes, waiting to hear his name. Coach is saying, “I want to see a one-two-three from you ladies, alright? These distance events are where we make up major points in other places.” George thinks it’s a good thing he’s been swimming for so long, or all this coach-speak would be gibberish to him.

“Alright, boys 200 free. Davidson, Jacobs, Ponk, Callahan. No stupid swims from you guys—looking at you, Jacobs. This isn’t the time to be going out in a forty-eight and not being able to get back.” There are a few muffled snickers, and George glances over at Karl. “I want to see plus two, plus two, plus one from all of you. Okay, the girls’ I.M. is gonna be Minx...”

Minutes on the clock tick by as Coach continues to explain the lineup, and George starts to get antsy. Most events are pretty predictable. He and Karl are in the 200 and the 500, Dream and Punz are in the 50 and the 100, Quackity is in the I.M. and breaststroke, pretty much everyone is where he expected them to be. George squirms in his seat, and then a thought hits him: if he’s getting bored, Dream’s probably *dying*. Dream’s never been good at quietly sitting still, and when he’s forced to, he usually gets claustrophobic and panicky. He closes his eyes for a moment, all his attention focused on listening behind him. After a second, he hears it: Dream’s breathing. It *does* sound a little faster than usual.

Like a reflex, he lets his hands drop back behind him, dangling in thin air, an invitation. There’s a few seconds of nothing before he feels Dream pick up one of his hands and begin to crack each knuckle carefully, methodically. The first time Dream did this, George thought it was completely weird. But soon, he realised that it calmed Dream down when he needed to focus, and then... it just became a thing they did. George doesn’t mind, really. It’s kind of nice. Dream’s hands are rough and warm, and never press too hard. And it’s so good to be able to touch him after all this time; to be able to comfort him when he really needs it.

Finally, Coach says, “Alright, boys’ 400 free relay.” George breathes a sigh of relief. The 4-free-relay is the last event of the meet, so the end of his speech is coming up, thank God. George knows he’s going to be in this one. Even though he’s a distance swimmer, he has the fastest 100-yard freestyle time on the team, so Coach would be crazy not to put him in it.

“Boys, I’m not going to lie to you. This one is going to be tight. It’s gonna come down to a few hundredths of a second, so I need every single person on this team to be putting their all into it. If every single person on this team does their jobs, this relay wins or loses the meet for us, so you guys are gonna be under a lot of pressure. Better be the race of your short little lives, you hear me? ‘Kay, that’ll be Quackity, Jacobs, Dream, and Davidson.”

Fucking— *What* ? What the hell? *Dream* is in it? Oh no. He’s in a relay with Dream. He rips his hands away and tucks them back in his own lap, squeezing hard to try and get rid of the echoes of Dream’s touch. Worse, he’s directly after Dream in a relay. That means they’re going to spend the whole week working together on their relay starts. Shit. Why didn’t he see this coming? Of *course*

Dream's in this relay. Coach took him out of the medley so he could put him in the 400 free instead. Crap. This is bad. This is very, very bad.

"Alright, that's it. If you have any questions or complaints, you can direct them to my submission box—" he points to the garbage can— "over there, because I don't give a shit. Head over to your lanes, your warmups are already in front of them for you."

It's a two-hour practice. Two hours until he has to stay late to practice relay starts. It's fine. It's fine.



"District relays, over to the blocks! If you're not in a relay, see you tomorrow."

Oh no. This is really, really bad. No, no, that's a bad line of thinking. It's District week; he doesn't have time for negativity. He practises some positive affirmations in his head. *This is fine. It's fine. It's gonna be great, I'm not going to look at Dream, I'm not going to cry. Nothing bad is going to happen.*

George is pretty good at positive affirmations.

Luckily, the medley is first, so he has a few minutes without Dream to mentally prepare himself. He hops in and heads over to the middle of the pool, where he pushes off the bottom and practises his backstroke finish, coming fast and hard into the wall. As his hand makes contact, he sees Quackity fly over his head and into the water. By the time he gets out of the pool, Quackity is coming back towards the blocks, swimming breaststroke, and Sapnap is getting ready to dive in.

He hopes the 4-free-relay practice goes well, so he doesn't have to talk to Dream about anything. He doesn't think he's ever been that lucky, though. The four medley swimmers walk over to Coach, and he gives them an unimpressed glare.

"Punz, that was the worst false start I've ever seen. Sapnap was practically still at the flags when you dove in; you're lucky you didn't kill him. Visualise a good relay start when you go home tonight. It better be perfect when we run through this tomorrow. Oh, and Davidson—watch that foot on your finish. If you're gonna go under, you have to keep it out. Don't be playing with fire on the first event, kid. We can't afford the DQ."

George stands off to the side, chatting with Quackity while they watch the girls' medley and then the boys' and girls' 2-free-relays, where each swimmer only swims 50 yards. (He absolutely, definitely does *not* watch the way Dream's back muscles ripple as he swings his arms before diving in.)

Too soon, it's time for the 4-free-relay, the one he's doing with Dream. God help him. He stands as far from Dream as possible behind the blocks, looking anywhere but his face until he's on the

block waiting for Karl to finish. When Dream finally dives off the block, he breathes out a sigh of relief. Quackity gives him a weird look, but he ignores him, and clambers up onto the block to get ready to go.

He's one of the only people on the team who still uses their hands when they get up on the blocks. He knows it makes him look like a child, small and scared, but he can't help it. There's something about the blocks that makes him feel so nervous and unsteady, and so he puts his hands down and uses them to climb on. He eventually manages to move his feet into position and wait for Dream to finish so it's his turn.

Dream is sprinting towards the wall at full speed now, and once he's close enough, George begins to swing his arms, building up momentum for a fast dive. He's got a good relay start: swing, step-step, then go, and he's got the fastest reaction time on the team (other than Punz, but he doesn't count because he false starts half the time). But halfway through his swing, Dream seems to slow down. Ugh. He really should have known that Dream wouldn't make it easy for him. George falters, trying to stop himself from diving too early, but his arms are already carrying him forward, off the block and into the air.

He tries his best to enter the water gracefully, considering he's half-diving, half-falling, but he still ends up entering the water at an awkward angle, his legs jolting with the impact. His goggles instantly fill with pool water. He surfaces with a grimace, shins and thighs stinging.

"Davidson! What the fuck are you doing? This is a relay. That means you have to *work* with your teammates, you have to trust them. You can't just go whenever you want and then try to back out halfway through. I don't want to see you baulk like that again."

He fixes his goggles, emptying the pool water out of them and pulling them up to his forehead. "But Dream was—"

"I don't give a rat's ass what Dream did. It's on *you* to watch him and time it right."

Before George pulls himself out of the pool, he pulls his goggles back on so his teammates won't see the tears stinging his eyes. He got yelled at, and it wasn't even his fault. It was stupid Dream. Of fucking course it was, it always is. Dream's been causing problems for George since the first day he walked through the door.

George isn't going to yell at Dream, though. He's going to be the bigger person. "Go to the other end. Run it again," he says, even though he wants to say *this is ALL YOUR FAULT, you stupid idiot*.

Dream gives a nod of acknowledgement and gets back in the water. As George carefully pulls himself up onto the block, he resolves that this time, he'll wait until he knows Dream is going to hit the wall. This way, he won't false start if Dream decides to keep acting like an idiot.

And then Dream is sprinting towards the wall at full force again, and George follows him with his eyes until he's fifteen yards away, then ten, then five. This time, he only starts to swing his arms as Dream's hand hits the wall. He lets the arm swing carry him through his *step-step*, and dives again, this time entering gracefully and painlessly (and very, very late).

"Davidson, that was *way* too slow," Coach says. "We don't have time to have a tea party on the blocks while we wait for you to figure out what Dream is doing." He turns to talk to the girls in the 400 free relay, and George swims back to the wall.

The four of them, the four girls, and the coach are the only people still on deck, so the boys walk

towards the boys locker room together now that they're done, leaving the girls behind where they're still talking to Coach about their relay. As they walk, George makes sure that Karl and Quackity stay between him and Dream.

"Dream, wait up a minute," Coach calls, voice echoing around the empty pool deck.

George has to physically stop himself from snickering out loud. Dream is *finally* going to get yelled at for causing problems.

"Davidson, you too."

Fuck.

They stand in front of Coach, both facing forward and avoiding looking at each other.

Coach crosses his arms. "Listen up. You know, we're officially called the *Men's* Swimming and Diving Team. So I don't understand why the two of you are acting like toddlers. Now, I don't know what the hell is going on with you two—"

"Well—" George interrupts, at the same time as Dream starts to say "He—"

"*Can it.* I don't know, and I don't *want* to know. I put up with the arguing all season. I thought it was getting better by itself. I thought you were going to handle it maturely and rationally." He sighs, bringing a hand up to pinch at the bridge of his nose. "Clearly I was wrong. I usually leave my swimmers to sort out their problems by themselves, but *this shit* has gone too far. I don't know which one of you is responsible, but I will not have you sabotaging my relay team. Got it?"

"Got it," they both mumble.

"Davi— *George*, as an upperclassman, you're expected to set an example and become a team leader. This is not how leaders behave. I *know* you can be a good teammate. I *know* you can do a good relay start. I don't want to see anything less towards Dream just because you don't like each other."

George opens his mouth, but nothing comes out. He closes it again and looks at his feet.

"And Dream, I know you're new to the team, but you have to learn the way we do things here. Petty drama and arguing that gets in the way of *my* practices? Not how we do things."

"Sorry," Dream says, and George isn't sure whether he sounds like he means it or not.

"So you better start getting buddy-buddy, and you better do it now, or you're *both* off the relay. Now get your asses to the locker room. I don't want to look at your faces anymore today."



“Ugh, Dream is just the *worst*,” George gripes to Niki over the phone that night. “He acts like he’s God’s gift to this swim team, but God’s gift to the swim team would be hitting him with a bus.”

“*George*. He’s really not that bad.”

“Easy for you to say. You’re not the one who has to figure out how to do a perfectly timed relay start when even *Dream* doesn’t know what he’s doing half the time.”

“Come on, you have to at least try,” Niki scolds him. “I don’t get what happened—last week you were almost civil, why are you suddenly back to being worst enemies?”

“I don’t know,” George lies. “He’s just, he’s just insufferable. I can’t swim with him.”

“Promise me that you’ll try to work nicely with him on this relay stuff.”

“I promise—” George imagines Dream’s scowling face, and falters. “I promise that I will *consider* it.”

And he will consider it—consider it to be a terrible idea. He has no plans to start being nice to Dream, and he’s sure Dream has no plans to start being nice to him.



George is by himself in the locker room, changing into sweats. Dream walks in, already dressed, and starts rummaging around in his locker next to George (when did he move back to his old locker?).

“Hey, George,” he mumbles.

“Dream.” George isn’t sure what else to say. *I miss you. Come back.*

“We need to talk.”

“Okay,” George says, a little hesitantly. He fixes the sleeves of his hoodie and turns away from his locker to face Dream. “I’m listening.”

“The truth is...” Dream fiddles with his sleeves, and his face looks a little pinker than usual. Is he *blushing* ? “The truth is, I like you, George. And not just as a friend.”

“You... do?”

“I do. I care about you. A lot. And I want you—*all* of you.” Dream’s eyes are earnest, brimming with tears. George thinks that he would probably do anything Dream wanted if he just looked at him like that.

Still, he hesitates. “You broke my heart, Dream.” It feels good to say it out loud, freeing.

“I know. I’m sorry. The last two weeks have been *hell*. I’ve missed you. I don’t ever want to go another day without talking to you again.” And he pulls George close, their faces inches apart. George’s eyes drop down to Dream’s mouth, his lips slightly parted. Dream leans forward, just the tiniest bit, and George *aches* for it.

“Kiss me,” he whispers. Dream leans in just an inch, then another, and he’s almost there, and his lips just barely ghost across George’s and–

George wakes up.

Fuck.

Chapter End Notes

hi!! ...don’t hate me for that ending hee hee. chapter 6 will be here next sunday the 19th, so. in the meantime, you can hang out here, leave me a comment to tell me everything you liked, everything you hated, and what your favorite book is. (i have a bajillion favorites, but my current one is the importance of being earnest, mostly bc it’s so unhinged.)

something ELSE you could do while you wait for the next chapter is read my other stuff! i have a dnf miraculous crossover, a dnf oneshot, and a karlnap oneshot. um, yeah. otherwise, just have a good week!! see you next time my shining stars.

xoxo goose

hi, i’m goose! check out my [twitter](#) if you’re looking for fic updates, extra scenes, and/or me being a toxic dnfer on a daily basis :)

Conflict and Resolution

Chapter Summary

“Now, I know from last season that you three are very close friends.” The reporter gestures to George, Quackity, and Karl. “Dream, how did you do with joining such a tight-knit relay team? Do you all get along?”

George looks at his feet.

“Well,” Dream starts hesitantly. “Most of the team, I fit in with right away.”

“Most?”

Chapter Notes

um ok warnings for this one. i don't think any (other than the regular tw for british spellings)?? just, y'know, have a good time, and read the chapter notes at the end or i will get you in your sleep /threat /i am threatening you

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George is not in love with Dream. He's not. He knows that it might look like it, a little, with the dick-sucking plus the moping plus the stupid dream he had last night, but he isn't. He might like Dream a little bit, but it's just a passing crush. He just needs to talk himself out of it.

He wants to kick himself for the way he fell into Dream's trap, even in his sleep. He's an idiot for believing a word Dream said in the dream (little-d dream. He's confusing even himself now. Stupid Dream and his stupid confusing name). He shouldn't have thought for a second that any of it was real. Dream would never say any of that in real life. And George doesn't want him to. He doesn't. He really doesn't.

Right?

Tuesday's relay rehearsals come far too soon for George's liking. He stumbles through his backstroke in the medley relay, unable to concentrate on a perfect, legal finish with how much he's dreading interacting with Dream. Niki flinches on her start and gets an earful from Coach.

“I don't care if the *fire alarm* is going off, you don't move a muscle until you hear the gun,” he shouts. “Once you've taken your mark, you can't be twitching around like that. That's how you get yourself instantly disqualified. I don't wanna see that shit again.” He turns to face the rest of the team. “From *any* of you.”

They get back into it, and time feels like it's accelerating, getting faster and faster, until suddenly, he's standing on the starting block. Dream is speeding towards him, using his stupid, brawny arms to propel himself through the water. When Dream is a few feet from the wall, he initiates his start. *Swing, step-step, go.* He's a little late, but it's much better than the start he did yesterday.

Coach only gives them general feedback, and George half-listens, catching bits and pieces of *important, down to the hundredths, make or break*. Dream isn't listening either. He can tell by the way his hand is twitching at his side.

Coach finally stops talking, and the four of them are starting to walk away when Coach calls after him. "Hey, Davidson. We gotta talk about your 500."

He has to bite the inside of his cheek to stop himself from groaning out loud. He's cold, tired, and hungry, and he just wants to go home. Still, he turns around.

Coach beckons him over to his office, and he follows him in through the door. He's never been in here before. He's seen it, briefly, when Coach was coming in or out, and a flash of it was visible through the open door, but he's never seen Coach invite someone in before. It's smaller than he thought, the large, cluttered desk taking up about half of the space. The other half is crammed with years and years of trophies and awards, and George can't help but feel impressed.

Coach moves across the room, sitting down heavily in a faded, over-stuffed red swivel chair. He gestures for George to sit in the chair across from him, which is another red swivel chair, only this one looks significantly less used. The colour is several shades brighter (at least, he thinks it is, but... y'know), and the black, plastic arms aren't scuffed with years and years of bumping them against the edge of the desk.

He looks at it reluctantly. Does Coach really want him to sit in it? Will he be upset if George gets pool water all over his chair?

"Sit, George."

He sits.

"I lied. You're not here to talk about your 500."

George groans. "If this is about Dream—"

"You're damn right it's about Dream. You need to start working together."

George just stares at him.

He sighs. "Alright, look. I've seen your relay starts before. I know what it looks like when you're giving it your all, and the one you did just now wasn't it. I understand that you and Dream have some, some *issue*, or whatever, but you gotta work together on this. This race is freakin' important, and I need you guys to be fully committed to it. That can't happen if you and Dream are having your weird little feud. So fix it."

"Coach, I *can't*, it's him that—"

"Don't give me that. Listen, I did the math. If every single person on the team does their job, we'll be tied, and whoever wins this relay will win the meet. If you guys are going to have that pressure on you at Districts, I need to be sure that you can work with each other."

George scowls. He can't just *fix* the fact that Dream hates him—that Dream betrayed him. He can't fix that Dream is apparently disgusted by him and can't put it aside for long enough to figure out this stupid start. They're not going to become best friends overnight just because they're on a relay together. "I..." he trails off. He doesn't know what to say.

Coach scoffs. "Don't look at me like that. This is how the world works, kid. Conflict and

resolution. Talk to each other. Maybe even find a compromise, I don't know."

"That doesn't sound like conflict and resolution," George grumbles. "That sounds like conflict, depression, acceptance."

"I mean it, George. Fix it or you're both out of the relay. I don't give a shit if we need you guys to win, I'm taking your asses out, and it's gonna be on you when we lose. You *may not* let your personal drama get in the way of the good of the team. Am I clear?"

"Yes, sir."



When George gets to practice on Wednesday, he marches straight up to Dream, who flinches back, looking startled.

He's not sure what to say, so he sticks out a hand.

Dream looks at it, then back up at George. "Huh?"

"This relay is important," he says, in lieu of an explanation. "Truce?"

"Oh." Dream tilts his head, thinking for a moment, then reaches out and clasps his hand. "Fine. Truce. I'll work with you if you work with me." They shake, and George knows he's supposed to be mad, but it feels so good to talk to Dream again that he can't bring himself to feel anything but relief. Even better, he can see in the set of Dream's jaw and the clasp of his hand that he means it this time, really means it. They have a truce.

At the end of practice, they have to stay late to run the relays again. The medley run-through goes well—George starts first, since he's the backstroke, and that's much easier than relay starts. But when he gets out to wait for the 400 free relay practice, his anxiety and anticipation build. When he finally heads over, Dream is already behind the blocks. Their eyes meet.

Conflict and resolution, George thinks, and he gives Dream a casual nod.

He's not expecting much of a response, but to his surprise, Dream's eyes light up. "Hi, George."

"Hey," George says back, giving Dream a small smile. "So, um. What's your plan?"

"Plan?"

"Yeah, like," he gestures awkwardly towards the pool, "are you coming in at full speed, when are you taking your last breath, do you tend to slow down at the last second or finish through the wall, that kind of stuff."

Dream blinks. “I don’t... know.”

This isn’t too much of a surprise—George knows that Dream hasn’t been swimming for very long, and he’s the anchor for the other relay he’s in, so he probably hasn’t been asked this before.

“Okay, let’s take lane six, we can figure it out. Just get in and do a normal finish. I’ll watch.”

“Okay.” Dream hops in and swims out to midpool. George sits down on the block.

“Okay, you ready? Go ahead.”



Friday arrives in the blink of an eye, and George’s hands are shaking all day at school. He knows that after his last class, he’s going to the pool. For *Districts*. He listens to classical music, takes deep breaths, and tries to unclench his jaw. There’s no reason to worry. They’re actually prepared, surprisingly. The team is rested and ready, the relays have perfected every start. Now that he and Dream are working together properly, their transition is the most flawless of them all. Everything is in place. Now all they have to do is... swim.

The district meet is divided into two days, so they’ll only be doing half of the events today. The other half, they can worry about tomorrow. Today, George is swimming the medley relay, then his 200 free. (And Dream is swimming the 50 free and the 200 free relay. George shouldn’t know Dream’s events better than his own, but he does.)

Coach gives them his big pep talk and sends them to the pool. Warmup is a blur, and then he’s standing with the rest of his relay and watching the girls’ medley. Then he’s jumping in, getting in position for his backstroke start, and then the gun goes off and he’s swimming, swimming, swimming. He crushes it and does a flawless finish (because he *knows* how to keep his foot up on his finish, thank you very much), and then Quackity’s flying over his head.

He wishes he had time to watch the rest of his relay swim, but his 200 free is too soon. He heads straight to the warm-down pool, doing a few slow laps to catch his breath before his 200 free.

When he arrives behind the blocks for his 200 free, he’s surprised to see Dream standing there, waiting for him. “Oh. Hi.”

Dream gives him the tiniest smile, and he curses himself for thinking it’s cute. “Hi.”

Words. George needs to remember some words. “Shouldn’t you be warming up for your 50?”

Dream shakes his head. “I’ll go warm up in a few minutes, but I just wanted to... uh, to wish you good luck. Or—not even luck, I guess. I know you’re gonna do well. You earned it.”

“Oh,” George manages. Suddenly, the butterflies in his stomach are for something other than his race.

After a few seconds, Dream awkwardly brings his hand up to scratch the back of his head (like an idiot. George wonders if he's forgotten he's wearing a swim cap). "Yeah, so, um, I should go."

Dream only makes it a few steps before George calls after him. "Wait!"

He turns around, face painted with cautious hope.

"Thank you. For... coming to say good luck. I appreciate it, Dream. I'll be cheering for you in your 50."

Dream smiles, then leaves to go warm up. The butterflies in George's stomach have turned to bubbles in his chest, lifting him up, up, up. When he dives in for his race, he lets the feeling drive him; he channels it into every stroke. And when he gets a little out of breath, it's like the feeling he used to get when Dream kissed him. The pictures of this race are going to be so, so dumb, because he can't stop smiling. But he loves every second, and when he touches the wall and looks at the scoreboard, it's the fastest 200 freestyle he's ever swum.

He stays in the water until everyone else has finished, hugging the swimmers on either side of him over the lane line. Karl's on one side, and on the other is a swimmer from the other team that he's been competing against since he was seven. They smile and laugh and congratulate each other, and then George catches Dream's eye across the pool, and he forgets the rest of his sentence.

Karl wraps an arm around him for their walk to the warmdown pool, and they stop to talk to Coach on the way. He grunts at them—but it's happier than his normal grunts—and says, "You did good, kids."

After his warmdown, he dries off and puts his jersey on, the one that says GOGY right across the back, and he gets to go up to the podium twice. Once with his relay team, and they accept their medals with beaming smiles, and once by himself, collecting his gold for the 200 free.

After that, the meet flies by. When he finally collapses in his bed that night, he can only remember flashes of it—screaming for Quackity in the IM, screaming for Dream in the 50, ignoring the side-eye he gets from Karl for that, watching Dream look fucking radiant accepting his first-place medal for the 50, and just being in such a loud, energetic environment. It's equal parts exhausting and exhilarating. He barely manages to shuck off his team jersey before he passes out with the lights still on.



When George arrives in the auxiliary gym for their meeting before the Saturday afternoon session, the team is already engaging in a heated debate. "It's simple bro code," Sapnap argues. "You do not disclose to the female gender the dick sizes of the boys."

Minx rolls her eyes. "Yesterday you told me there was no female gender."

“Well, you listen here—”

“Guys!” George cuts in, before this can get any more ridiculous. “Let’s focus, okay? Don’t we have a job to do?”

“Live a little, Gogs.” Tommy, a freshman, kicks the back of his knee as he walks by. George yelps as his legs buckle, and he shoots the kid a glare. He goes to put his bag down next to Niki’s.

“Hiya, George. You alright?”

“Yeah, I’m good. What about you? Are you wearing your crazy socks?”

Niki beams, pulling up the leg of her sweatpants to show her hot-pink socks.

George squints. “Do they— Is that *Lilo & Stitch*?”

“Just Stitch, but yeah. Why? What’s on yours?”

“Um.”

From a few feet away, Tina perks up. “Yeah, let’s see. Show us your socks!”

Karl groans. “Oh, I know what they say.”

“Okay, well, okay—” George huffs. “I made them weeks ago.” He pulls up his pant leg, too, showing one of his rainbow tie-dye socks. Across the front, in bold, black sharpie, it says *DREAM*.

“Now show us the other one,” Foolish prompts.

George complies. The other one says *SUCKS*. The group descends into giggles.

Dream walks in and looks at George’s legs. His eyebrows shoot up and his jaw drops in surprise and poorly-contained amusement. “Really?”

“Really,” George says, laughter threatening to burst out of him. “Get memed, idiot.”

“I can’t believe this. This is bullying. This is—”

“Woah, woah, woah, Dream. What’s with all the negativity?” George hides his socks again. “It’s a championship meet day. Let’s try to have a can-do attitude, hm?”

“Yes, George!” George turns around to see Coach walking in, gracing them with one of his rare, rare smiles. “That’s what I like to hear!”

George grins back. *So Coach is in a good mood today*. He shoots a smug little wink at Dream.

“Listen up, team. I talk a lot about doing your jobs, and that’s not what you guys did yesterday.” He pauses, probably for dramatic effect. “You went above and beyond. You blew me away, and yesterday we were thinking it was going to come down to one or two points, but with where we’re at right now, we’re looking at a clear win.”

A buzz of excitement ripples through the team, whispers and murmurs slowly growing in the silence.

“Now, that doesn’t mean we get complacent, okay? That means we go out there and do the same thing today, got it? I’m proud of you guys. Get out there, do your jobs—I know you know them—

and the district title is ours.”



There’s no silence quite like the silence in the seconds before the first event of a swim meet. It’s like the entire room is holding its breath—even the water seems to have gone silent. George stands along the side of the pool with everyone else, watching the swimmers in the first event, the 100-yard freestyle, step up onto the blocks. They’re a line of textbook sprinters, tall and lean, with Dream right in the middle.

“Take your mark.”

A loud clang sounds from the stands above them (probably someone knocking over a metal water bottle, or something).

And Dream flinches. *Big time.*

Everyone knows the rules. Once you take your mark, you can’t move. Can’t even twitch. And what Dream just did could not be considered a twitch. There’s no way the officials missed it. He’ll definitely be disqualified.

An almost deathly silence falls over the natatorium. George thought it was quiet before, but this is something else entirely. This is negative noise, emptiness that drains the life out of the entire room.

“What’s going on?” Tommy whispers in his ear. As a freshman, he doesn’t understand the points system enough to feel the ice-cold dread permeating every molecule of the arena.

“If they call that,” George whispers back, “we lose twenty-six points to Manburg.” Twenty for Dream’s place, and six for every other spot their swimmers move up in the event.

“Oh. Bollocks.”

This, even Tommy can understand. If Dream is disqualified, it puts them *twenty-six* points back. Sure, they had a lead, but it wasn’t a twenty-six point lead. Shit. He better not be disqualified.

The starter’s voice crackles over the speakers. “Stand, please.” (They do this sometimes, if there’s a disruption—or when someone gets disqualified, but George is trying not to think about that.)

The swimmers stand up, and George’s heart drops into his stomach at the look on Dream’s face. He knows.

“Take your mark.”

This time, the gun sounds, and the swimmers take off, tearing down the pool in a whirlwind of arms and legs and water. They keep going, and Dream’s winning, but it doesn’t matter. The

damage is done. Dream slams his hand into the touchpad, and his name and time appear on the scoreboard next to a big number one. Everyone else's names pop up, too, as they finish.

Every set of eyes in that pool is fixed on the scoreboard, waiting to see what happens. A few seconds go by, and then—

Dream's name flickers. It flickers again, and this time it doesn't come back. The numbers on the board shift to reflect the change, second becoming first, third becoming second, and so on.

Fuck. Shit. Fuck. He actually got disqualified. And it wasn't even his fault, really.

Coach looks ashen. George doesn't blame him. Without those points, they need a miracle to happen for them to have any chance of winning the meet. Even with yesterday's extra points, this was a mistake they couldn't afford to make.

Dream pulls himself out of the pool and makes his way over to where the team is standing. His face is a mixture of guilt, disappointment, and shame, and George wants to slap it off of him. He wants to grab him by the shoulders and shake him and say *it wasn't your fault*.

Thankfully, Coach doesn't yell at Dream, only looks at him and mutters, "Go warm down."

George should warm up for his 500 free. Right now. (His sudden interest in warming up has absolutely nothing to do with the fact that Dream is in the warm-down pool.)

He makes his way over and gets in the lane right next to Dream's. If he keeps looking over there, he's just working on his bilateral breathing. He's definitely not checking on Dream, or worried about him, or anything ridiculous like that.

When Dream gets out, walking across the pool deck and disappearing into the locker room, George desperately wants to follow him, but he knows his race is coming up soon. He resolves to go in there and make sure Dream is okay if he still hasn't come out when the 500 is over. He finishes warming up and stands behind his lane, waiting for the event to start, but it's a little hard to focus on visualising his race plan when all he can see is the heartbreak in Dream's eyes.

Once the race starts, he uses his anger to fuel him. But this time, unlike so many times before, he's not angry at Dream. He's angry at the officials, whoever dropped that stupid water bottle—hell, the whole *world*. He's angry that anyone could make Dream feel that way, and then he's angry at himself for caring so much.

He gets first, Karl gets second, and their other teammates, Ponk and Callahan, end up eighth and twelfth. He hugs Karl across the laneline, smiling along for his teammates and the coaches and the cameras, but all he can think about is making sure Dream is okay. He warms down as quickly as he possibly can, and then he's rushing towards the locker room.

When he bursts through the locker room door, Dream is sitting alone on the bench, facing away from him, looking down at his hands. George stops in his tracks. Maybe he shouldn't be doing this. Maybe Dream doesn't want him here. He almost turns around, but then he remembers Dream's face, and he stays. He's not going to leave Dream alone right now.

George finishes crossing the room to put a cautious hand on Dream's shoulder. "Dream?"

Dream glances over his shoulder, and seeing his face feels like a punch to the gut. He looks... devastated. More than that, he looks *guilty*. Like he's blaming himself for the points the team lost.

"George," he whispers. His face crumples. "I screwed it all up."

George takes a step forward wordlessly. Dream stands up, and steps over the bench, and then George is folding him into his arms, wrapping him up in a tight hug. Although Dream is a giant, his body is curved in on itself so he can bury his face in George's shoulder. He hears a little snuffle, and Dream's shoulders shake under his hands as he silently cries.

George knows he's still wet from his warm-down, and he's probably getting pool water all over Dream's jersey, but he holds on anyway, bringing a hand up to stroke soothingly at Dream's hair. He tries to muster up all the comfort he can and push it into Dream through his hands.

"It wasn't your fault," he whispers. "It wasn't your fault." The seconds tick by, and he only holds on tighter as he feels the tension in Dream's shoulders melt away.

Dream's skin is cold and his breathing is shaky, but in George's embrace he starts to slowly warm up.

They stand there for several quiet minutes, George's hands smoothing over Dream's hair and across his back, while Dream simply clings to him. His tears slow and eventually stop, but he keeps holding on. They just exist together, in this quiet moment for the two of them, and nothing can touch them. The world could burn down around them and George wouldn't notice. He hopes that no matter what else happens today, he can make Dream feel better for these few minutes.

The moment only ends when an announcement from the pool breaks through their little bubble. "...results of the Men's 500 Freestyle. In sixteenth place..."

George's hand slips from Dream's hair, and he reluctantly disentangles himself from the embrace. "Er, I should- Um." He waves an awkward hand towards the door. "The, um, podium."

"Right," Dream steps back, eyes red. George turns and is halfway out the door when Dream's voice stops him. "Wait! You're not wearing your jersey."

"Oh." He starts towards his locker, then stops in his tracks. "Oh shit. I left it behind the blocks, and there's no time to go get it. I don't *really* need it... do I?" They both know the answer to that. Of course he needs it. It's a team tradition, he's a district champion, and he's meant to be leading and representing his team, not showing up in the wrong clothes. But... he doesn't have time to get it. And he doesn't have time to stand here, frozen in indecision.

"Take mine."

George stares at Dream, dumbfounded. "*What?*"

But Dream is already pulling the jersey off and chucking it at his head. "Go, go, you're gonna be late."

He looks at the jersey, at the big letters spelling out DREAM across the back. Well, he doesn't have time to argue. He yanks it over his head, making it back out on deck as the announcer calls, "And in first place, with a time of 4:43.72, DSMP's George Davidson."

He plasters on his big District Champion smile, and walks across the bulkhead towards the podium. His coach is waiting there to put the medal over his head and shake his hand, and then he hugs each of the other three boys on the podium. Once he gets to Karl, who's standing in the third place spot on the podium, he remembers what he's wearing. There's no way Karl didn't notice.

Sure enough, Karl pulls back with a sly grin. "Nice jersey."

"Fuck off," He groans. "I left mine behind the blocks."

“How does it feel to wear Dream’s jersey, George? Is it everything you’ve ever hoped?”

“It smells like Old Spice and entitlement,” he hisses before he hops up to his spot. That’s a lie, of course. It smells like Dream, like warmth and comfort and just a little bit of heartbreak. There’s clapping and cheering and people taking photos, but all George can concentrate on is the way Dream is staring at him from across the pool. It’s hard to tell from this far away, but he thinks he sees Dream’s lips curve into a small smile watching him pose for pictures.



Backstroke is next, followed by breaststroke. In both events, George’s teammates do significantly better than they were expected to, and then Coach calls the relay team over with a look of grim determination.

“Guys.” He brandishes a calculator like it’s a weapon, pointing it at each of them in turn. “After Quackity’s breaststroke, we have a chance to win this thing. But only if you guys win the relay. It’s going to be tight, and whichever team gets second place loses the meet. So, in case you were wondering, now would be a great time to get your asses in gear. Work together and get it done—you’ve got the whole team behind you.”

They warm up and walk over to the blocks for the relay, and it’s almost time, and George isn’t ready.

Okay, physically, he might *seem* ready. He’s in the right place, at the right time, with all the right stuff. But mentally is a whole different story. He’s not worried about his relay start—he’s got the best reflexes on the team, he can read what Dream is doing—but the stakes are high, and it’s a long race. Anything could happen. He could choke, or go out too fast, or too slow, or just not be quick enough—and that’s just in his leg of the relay. The same things could happen to any of his teammates. And it’s so *loud* in the pool, yells and cheers echoing off every wall.

He glances over at Dream, who is already watching him. His worry must be obvious, because Dream holds his gaze and sucks in a slow, deep breath. George mirrors his actions, slowly feeling the sharp pinch of anxiety dull down to regular pre-race nerves as they breathe together. He offers a grateful half-smile, and Dream nods, resting a warm hand briefly on his shoulder.

Right now, they are teammates. They may still be the same people who kissed and fought and kissed and fought and are stuck in the turbulent space between enemies and friends and something else entirely, but beneath it all, they’re teammates. It feels like a miracle.

And no matter how much he doesn’t want it to, the relay gets closer and closer every minute, and then the gun is going off and Quackity is diving in. The three of them yell themselves hoarse cheering for him, and he isn’t in the lead, but he’s doing alright. Their relay is ordered from slowest to fastest, so they knew they might lose some ground in the first leg. Each person is swimming 100 yards, four laps, and Karl climbs up on the block when Quackity starts his last lap.

George watches his start carefully—there’s a little bit of delay between Quackity’s finish and Karl’s feet leaving the block. Coach will yell at them for that. Karl’s about ten yards—almost half of the pool—behind the lane next to theirs when he dives in, and he isn’t catching up. *It’s fine*, George has to remind himself. That’s what he’s for. That’s what Dream’s for. They’ve got time.

When Karl’s about halfway, Dream glances over at George. There’s something like uncertainty in his eyes. George isn’t sure why—if there’s anything he’s sure about, it’s Dream’s leg of the relay. “You’re *Dream*,” he reassures him. “You showed me. Now show them.”

Dream doesn’t say a word, but his expression hardens with a familiar determination, and George knows they’re going to be fine. He steps onto the block in one smooth motion, eyes tracking Karl as he barrels closer and closer. His start is flawless. (Of course.)

The boy from Manburg has more than half a lap on him, but he’s big and he’s *fast*, and he’s gaining ground every second. *That’s so hot*, George’s brain supplies, and he bans it from saying anything else for the rest of the meet.

Quackity has pretty much recovered from his swim by now, and he stands shoulder-to-shoulder with George and together they yell their faces off. Karl stands with them, exhausted but still managing a whoop every few seconds.

Dream catches up one body-length. Two. But his leg of the relay isn’t long enough, and he’s not going to catch them all the way up, and it’s all going to be down to George. Shit. Okay. George steps onto the block, and nerves make him shakier than normal, so Karl holds his hand to help him up.

You’ve practised this, he reminds himself sternly. *You know it by heart*. He keeps his eyes on Dream, lets his instincts take over.

Dream’s right there. He swings his arms, *one more stroke*, step-step, and then he’s going, right as Dream’s hand slams into the touchpad. The second he hits the water, the uncertainty disappears, replaced by stubborn determination. He can do this. He knows he can. It’s just him and the water.

As he swims, he pretends he’s Dream—tall, strong, a natural swimmer, moving down the pool with steady, powerful strokes. He can see the boy in the next lane out of the corner of his eye, and he knows that’s his goal.

His lungs burn and his entire body aches, exhausted from two days of racing and cheering and adrenaline, but he keeps going. His team is counting on him. The meet is his to win or lose. He turns at the halfway point, maybe three or four feet behind the person next to him. Two more laps. That’s all. Just two. He literally just did a twenty-lap race; he can get through these last two. He needs to. For himself. For his team. For Dream. This is everything he’s been working towards. He just needs to grit his teeth and put his head down and swim. He doesn’t have time to hesitate. He doesn’t even have time to breathe.

His legs are on fire and his arms are screaming and his vision is going dark and he keeps going, going, going, until his hand hits the wall.

The crowd explodes, screaming for the winners. He grasps the wall, just hanging on it for a moment as his head drops back and he finally, *finally* gasps in air, head spinning and body half-numb. Who won? Did he do it? He rips his goggles off and turns to look at the scoreboard, but it’s all kind of blurry and hazy, and he can’t actually remember which lane he’s in to check the team’s place. Numbly, he shakes the hand of the swimmer next to him, then tilts his head up to look at his teammates.

Dream, Karl, and Quackity are jumping up and down, grins on their faces. Dream meets his eyes, and reaches two strong hands out, hauling him out of the water effortlessly and depositing him on the deck. George's heart soars.

"You won, George! You did it!" He's laughing, and George is so tired, but he laughs too, almost delirious.

And then Dream is scooping him up, grabbing his waist and spinning him around like he weighs nothing. He throws his arms around Dream's neck and buries his face in Dream's shoulder, hardly daring to believe it.

He did it. *They* did it. They won the meet. He clutches Dream like his life depends on it, uses the squeeze of his arms around Dream's neck to convey everything he's feeling but doesn't know how to say. He thinks he wants to stay in this moment forever, breathless and aching and so, so happy.

Dream squeezes him back, crushing him in a hug, and they're swaying back and forth and laughing together, and Dream sounds like he's over the moon right now. "I knew you could do it, George, I fucking knew it! I love you—" And then he freezes in George's arms.

George's laugh dies in his throat as reality comes crashing back. This is Dream he's hugging. Dream, who hates him. Dream, who's disgusted by him. Dream, who, even right now, is stumbling backwards like George has burned him. Dream, who most certainly does not love him, and who forgot in their brief 'teammates' act that they can't stand each other, that they are not friends and never will be.

George doesn't blame him. He'd forgotten too.



George is a robot as he follows the team to talk to Coach, and then to cool down, and then to the podium, where he accepts another gold medal with a forced smile.

A reporter is there, a young woman that looks more than a little bedraggled after a night in the humidity of the pool, and she pulls them aside for an interview for the newspaper. She hits *record* in her phone's Voice Memos app. "How did you deal with the pressure of knowing the whole meet would come down to you four?"

Dream answers. "Well, obviously the biggest thing that could go wrong for us is if we got, uh, disqualified, so our relay starts were a big part of it. We worked on them and we learned our transitions, and we knew not to stress too much about it, because we're a family and we trust each other."

Cold, heavy guilt trickles into George's heart, quickly followed by irritation. How can Dream stand there and pretend they're a real team, a *family*, when he can't even meet George's eyes? He pushes

his feelings away, and tries to be calm, rational, like Coach always is in his interviews. No matter how he feels about Dream right now, he's got an image to uphold.

The reporter smiles, and George does his best to return it. That is, until she asks her next question, addressing him, Karl, and Quackity. "It must have been difficult to stay confident about that after what happened in the 100 free. Were any of you worried that Dream would have another false start?"

Quackity crosses his arms. "Well, it wasn't *really* a false start, was it? Some idiot made a loud noise in the middle of a swim meet, and the stupid-ass officials—"

"That is to say," George butts in, elbowing him, "*no*, we weren't worried. We've gone over these starts a hundred times, and Dream's have always been flawless. We trust him. Besides, Dream's one of the best swimmers on the team—he won us *sixty* points this meet. Anybody that would fault him for not winning another twenty is completely missing the point. Everyone on the team probably could have done better in *some* way, but we don't sit and pick apart every missed point." He shrugs. "Like he said, we're a family."

The reporter nods. "Good, good. George, you were the anchor. That's a big responsibility, and on top of that, you dove in with a lot of ground to catch up. Can you tell me a little bit about that?"

"Well, I knew it was going to be a close race, but I knew that we could make it as long as my teammates all did their jobs and I did mine. And we went out there and everybody did exactly what they were supposed to, and that's what won us the race. It's all maths, you know? It's no use comparing *our* times, 'cos we're four different people, so it's all about us each doing what we have to do and I think my teammates really did that."

Karl pats him on the shoulder. "George is too humble. C'mon, George, just say you carried the team."

"Gogy-Wogy, MVP," Quackity adds in a ridiculous British accent, and George rolls his eyes.

"The hardest part was putting up with these nimrods," he tells the reporter, and she laughs.

"Now, I know from last season that you three are very close friends." She gestures to George, Quackity, and Karl. "Dream, how did you do with joining such a tight-knit relay team? Do you all get along?"

George looks at his feet.

"Well," Dream starts hesitantly. "Most of the team, I fit in with right away."

"Most?"

"Ah...." Dream falters, and George jumps in.

"Dream and I butted heads a bit at the beginning of this season," he explains. "But we have a lot of respect for each other, and we learned how to be good teammates, and that makes us stronger as a team." He's lying. Maybe an hour ago he would have believed it, but now he knows the truth: there is nothing good about the kind of teammates they are.

"Exactly," Dream agrees. "George is a really genuine, positive teammate, you know? When I first showed up, we tended to argue. But then a little while back, he was out for a couple weeks for an injury, and suddenly it was like there was a huge hole in the team. George ties us all together, keeps us going, and I didn't really see that until he wasn't there anymore. He lights up the room,

and he's the hardest worker out of all of us. And I think the extra time it took me to, to see that and to understand him makes me appreciate him more."

George knows Dream's every facial expression, and yet... he can't see any trace of a lie in Dream's face right now. It almost seems like Dream means it. He knows better, of course, but he thinks that if he didn't already know how Dream *really* felt, he'd believe him. Wow. Dream must be an even better actor than he thought.

"That's perfect, thank you boys very much." The reporter ends the recording. "Congratulations on your win."



When it comes out, the title of the article is "Davidson Leads Men's Swimming to Victory." There's a huge photo of him, taking a breath during one of his races. He can tell it was the 200 freestyle by the way he's grinning. *Poor, deluded idiot*, he thinks. *He's got no idea what he's in for*. He reads a few lines.

At the District Swimming Championship this weekend, there was one clear standout: George Davidson. The junior won two individual events, the 200 yard freestyle and the 500 yard freestyle, and two relays, the medley and 400 yard freestyle. But his excellence outside the pool was what really shined through in the statements of his coaches and teammates. His coach said, "He always knows what's expected of him and he always gets out there and does it, no complaints." Not only is Davidson a talented swimmer, he also has close relationships with everyone on the team. One such teammate is sophomore Clay Dream. "[Davidson] lights up the room," said Dream. "He's the hardest worker out of all of us." Dream swam on the winning 400 free relay team with Davidson and two other teammates—

George throws the newspaper in the trash. He can't read any more.

Chapter End Notes

originally wasn't gonna have dream cry because i used to make fun of my teammates that would cry over a swim race. but to be fair to him, it was pretty catastrophic. so. anyways, next chapter next sunday. this is how it goes. i also am considering adding a chapter to the chapter count?? maybe???

if you are enjoying the story, here are some things you can do EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE AN ACCOUNT:

-leave kudos

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if you do have an account, please consider subscribing to this story OR user subbing to me because i have lots of fun stuff coming up :) or you could leave a bookmark that says something silly those are my favourite.

ALSO--the colourful baublely things in between scenes are meant to be lane lines. like, swimming lane lines. if that was not clear. because they swim? get it? anyways

yep that's all!! see you next week. xoxo goose

hi, i'm goose! check out my [twitter](#) if you're looking for fic updates, extra scenes, and/or me being a toxic dnfer on a daily basis :)

State(s) of Emergency

Chapter Summary

“It’s Dream,” George blurts out. “He’s being so annoying. He’s just... he’s driving me insane, okay? He’s impossible to talk to.”

Karl frowns. “You guys seemed okay at Districts, like, after the relay. You were acting almost like... friends, or something. Did something happen since then?”

George shrugs uncomfortably. “Sort of. I don’t know. It was kind of always like this—except when it wasn’t, but... I was just being dumb, I guess. I mean... he’s dumb. I dunno.” He leans his head against the cool metal of his locker. “I just want him to be normal.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I love you.

I love you. I love you. I love you.

The stupid thing is that George was barely even thinking it before Dream said it at Districts. But now he can’t get it out of his head. *I love you.*

The even stupider thing is that now that he’s heard Dream say it, he wants to hear it again and again and again. He thinks he could die happy with those words in his ears. *I love you.*

But he won’t hear it again, and he won’t die happy, because Dream doesn’t love him and he never will.

The locker room is eerily quiet on Monday. With Districts behind them, the only swimmers still at practice are those going to States. George walks in and immediately locks eyes with Dream. *I love you*, his mind says, unbidden.

This is ridiculous. George is hopeless. Dream has done so many things to make his feelings clear. *Stuck-up, entitled, selfish*, Dream called him in that stupid closet. And yet, George’s brain chooses to latch onto three very different words, even though they were obviously a lie. Even though Dream leapt off him, proving he wanted nothing to do with him.

He needs to talk to Dream. Reestablishing their relationship as strictly teammates will definitely help him get rid of these stupid, awful thoughts. It’ll also help them make their relay start as perfect as possible, just like it did last week. Yeah. He’s going to talk to Dream.

He makes his way across the locker room, and speaks in a low voice. “Dream,” he starts, “Any chance you can hang back a second so we can talk—”

“I can’t.” Dream turns to him, expression blank. “I don’t want to be late for practice.” And he grabs his water bottle and leaves.

George blinks. Dream has never cared about being behind his lane on time. Which means... he's just being a jerk. Great.

George grabs his stupid goggles and stomps out onto the pool deck. He steals glances at Dream all throughout warmup, but Dream never looks at him. Okay. Maybe he just doesn't want to look in this direction. Maybe he has... neck problems.

The main set is long, which means Coach is going to take ten minutes to explain it. George scoots closer to the lane line so he can have a whispered conversation with Dream, but apparently Dream has other plans, because he's drifting to the other side of the lane, where George can't reach him.

It's like this all night. It's the longest practice of George's entire life, and Dream dodges him every minute of it. At the end, George tries to corner Dream in the locker room, but he's gone before either of them say a word.

As George trudges back to his locker, he's forced to face the inevitable truth: Dream is avoiding him. He must know that George wants to be friends again, and he can't bear to go through the trouble of rejecting him properly.

He knows Dream hates him, he does, but he still misses the way they were the week before districts, during their brief truce. It was such a relief to be able to work together, to talk to each other, but he should have known that Dream wouldn't be able to keep up the act for long. Dream hates to be constrained, so it must have been really difficult for him to work with someone who repulses him so much.

He just wishes that he could have had a few more minutes to pretend before Dream decided to avoid him like the plague and end their partnership for good.

The worst part is that he doesn't even need Dream to talk to him anymore for the relay, can't force him to cooperate for the good of the team. Their relay transition is flawless. He knows Dream's finish like the back of his hand, and despite everything happening out of the pool, he still has absolute faith in Dream's ability to execute it perfectly every time.

It's honestly exhausting to think about. The whole situation just makes him want to go home and curl up in his bed. He can barely imagine dealing with Dream not talking to him for the rest of the practice, let alone the rest of... forever. They're going to be teammates at least until George graduates, which is over a year away. Is Dream really going to avoid him for that long? The idea makes his stomach turn.

He stuffs his goggles in his backpack, and he's about to shut his locker when Karl grabs his shoulder.

"George," he says quietly.

"Karl," George huffs. He really doesn't have time for this. He's late for an appointment with Ben. And Jerry.

"What's up? You seem kind of off today."

"It's nothing. I don't want to talk about it."

Karl shrugs. "Okay, but I'm here if--"

"It's Dream," George blurts out. "He's being so annoying. He's just... he's driving me insane, okay? He's *impossible* to talk to."

Karl frowns. “You guys seemed okay at Districts, like, after the relay. You were acting almost like... friends, or something. Did something happen since then?”

George shrugs uncomfortably. “Sort of. I don’t know. It was kind of always like this—except when it wasn’t, but... I was just being dumb, I guess. I mean... he’s dumb. I dunno.” He leans his head against the cool metal of his locker. “I just want him to be normal.”

Karl laughs. “Nothing about the two of you has ever been normal. Listen, I know it might be frustrating, but just try to make it through this week, and then you guys can fight all you want. Just put up with him until States are over. Maybe you and I will be roommates, and I can protect you from him.”

YOU DON’T GET IT, George wants to yell. Instead, he smiles tiredly. “I will. Thanks, Karl.”

Karl nods, shouldering his backpack. “I’m always around if you need anything.” The door thuds shut behind him.

George groans out loud and grabs his stuff so he can finally, *finally* go home. He swings open the door and—

“Davidson!”

George clamps his mouth shut to stop himself from screaming in frustration. “Yes, Coach?” He barely avoids adding, *Why are you waiting for me in the hallway?*

“We gotta talk about your 500. For real, this time. C’mere.”

For the second time in the past week, George finds himself sinking into the too-pristine red chair in Coach’s cluttered office. (Although it does now have his butt-mark from last time.)

“Alright, Davidson. I’m gonna give it to you straight.”

When do you not? George doesn’t say.

“You’re projected to get eighth place in the 500 this weekend, kid. My five-year plan doesn’t have you that close to the top until States next year. Do you know what that means?”

George frowns. “I’m... doing well?”

“It means you can *win*. You’re only ten seconds back from the guy in first. If you drop fifteen seconds—ten for the gap and another five to account for any other potential drops—you’re well within reach of a top spot.”

George blinks. A top spot, at *States*? There’s no way. “Really?” he finally asks.

“*Hell* yeah, Davidson,” Coach says. “So that means I better not see any more of that mopey shit you were doing today. I don’t know what’s going on with you, but whatever it is, it can wait a week.”

Here’s the thing: Coach is a great guy, and he might have a point. But also, he’s full of shit sometimes. *All you have to do is drop ten seconds*, he’ll say, or, *Drop eight seconds and the spot is yours!* He’s kind of notorious for having a little too much faith in his swimmers. But fifteen seconds is a big jump even for him.

But... on the other hand... maybe if George tries really really hard, maybe if he puts all these

ridiculous feelings behind him, he can end up on the podium. If he's in the top four, he can win a state medal, something he's wanted to do for years.

"Okay," he says. "I'll do it."

"Damn right you will. Now get out of my office."



Over the next few days, George does his best not to mope too much. Honestly, he should have seen this whole Dream thing coming. It's not like they could have pretended to be friends forever. Still, it hurts to think about how fast Dream dropped the act. He couldn't even make it through Districts?

But Coach's words about putting it behind him stick in his mind, so he doesn't think about it at practice. If he wants to do his best at States, he needs to separate his training from his problems. He focuses his efforts on swimming and saves his troubles for late at night, when he lies awake thinking about closets and locker rooms and tantalising glimpses of what could be, right before reality comes crashing in.

They'll leave for States early Wednesday morning, so Coach calls them over to the benches before practice on Monday to go over the schedule with them.

"Come here, guys, sit down. Okay. So the bus is leaving from here at six a.m. sharp. If you're not on it, you don't swim, got it? We're going to get there around nine AM, and we're stopping at the hotel before we go to the pool for the first day. Oh, room assignments. Uh, I have the list somewhere... okay, boys will be on the fourth floor. Rooms: Jacobs and Sapnap, Quackity and Punz, Davidson and Dream, and Foolish, you get your own room. As for the girls..."

Even as Coach keeps talking, the words echo in George's head. *Davidson and Dream. Davidson and Dream.* No. There's no way he's rooming with Dream. He can't. He won't.

George dimly registers Coach talking to the girls, giving out times and room assignments, but he can't hear much over the pounding of his own heart. He is *not* sharing a room with Dream. This is not happening.

But it is happening, and George wants to jump up and down and scream and cry and pull his hair out. He wants to grab Coach by the shoulders and shake him and yell, *What the fuck is wrong with you? Why would you put me in a room with him? You seriously couldn't put me with anyone fucking else? I'm friends with every single other person on the States team, and you had to put me with the one person who won't even fucking look at me?* Instead, he sits there and seethes.

This is all Coach's fault. He *knows* how much trouble Dream has caused George this season. He literally had to force them to get along before Districts, and they've only gotten worse since then, so why the hell would he think having them sleep in the same room would be a good idea?

As he gets in the pool and starts to swim, his anger begins to subside. There's no way Coach could have known there was anything more to their animosity than childish bickering. He probably just thinks they do it to be difficult. He doesn't know about the hole in George's chest that aches every time he looks at Dream. He doesn't know about cut-off conversations or harsh words in dark rooms, about anything that's been going on all season. It's not his fault.

Honestly, George was overreacting. It'll be fine. He'll put on a brave face, they'll go to States, and nobody will know anything is wrong. George doesn't have to talk to Dream, doesn't have to look at him, just has to sleep in the same room with him and pretend the three feet between their beds isn't killing him. What could go wrong?



George is not very good at putting on a brave face. He can tell by the way the whole team is eyeing him as they wait for the bus on Wednesday morning. Karl opens his mouth, then closes it again. Foolish stares openly. Only Sapnap is oblivious, crunching almonds like there's nothing wrong in his life. And maybe there isn't. Maybe George is the only one here with an imminent catastrophe on his personal horizon.

When the bus pulls up, Karl hangs back a second. "Do you want to talk about—"

"No," George says. And that's that. They get on the bus, and George sits down in the farthest seat from Dream he can find. The tension between them has never been so real, so tangible, and they haven't even looked at each other. George might be going insane. It feels like his life has turned into a countdown to the moment he has to be alone with Dream again.

The bus ride is a little awkward, to say the least. After the first forty-five minutes of silence, George is just about ready to jump out of the window. Maybe if he—

"Do you know how many almonds I can fit into my belly button?" Sapnap asks, out of the blue. "Six. I have a very wide and deep belly button."

Silence. Complete, utter, deafening silence.

After a beat, Sapnap speaks again. "I mean, it's like... cavernous."

"Sapnap," Karl reprimands softly, and Sapnap shuts his mouth. They're quiet for the rest of the ride.



George leads the lane at warmups. Unlike at Districts, he's shaved and rested for States, and this is his biggest meet all year. Most people rest before Districts, but sometimes Coach decides that someone's place at States is certain enough that they can delay their rest until they really need it. This year, Dream, George, and Karl are the guys that get to do that.

It would be a lot easier to concentrate on leading the warmup if he couldn't feel Dream's eyes on him the entire time. After avoiding eye contact for over a week, now Dream won't stop stealing glances, like he wants to talk or something. For the first time, George hopes he doesn't.

Districts was two days, but George is only swimming at one day of States. They aren't expecting much out of their medley relay, so they go in just intending to enjoy it, and they place twelfth, getting second in their heat. After, George finds Dream, and for the first time, he's easy to track down.

"I'll be cheering for you today," he says carefully. "We're teammates."

"Teammates." Dream's expression is unreadable. "Okay. I'll be cheering for you too."



George keeps his promise, standing with Karl and yelling for all he's worth during both of Dream's events. Dream gets third in the 50, because only someone like him could go from a brand-new swimmer to third in the state in less than a year. George thinks if he keeps going like this, he might win next year.

Dream's other event, the 200 free relay, goes well. At least, Dream does well. George doesn't really look at anyone else. He barely remembers his own event, the 200 free, because he spent most of it looking for Dream, wondering if he would be cheering like he said he would.

Before he goes to warm up for his 500, his coach catches his arm. "George."

"Yeah?"

“Your 200 was fine—it was good, even. But it could have been better if you weren’t so in your head the whole time. Whatever happened there, don’t let it happen here, got it? I want you to swim this race like you mean it, and I want you to swim it for yourself. Don’t get in your head, just focus on the water. Now go do your warm up.”

George nods and pulls his arm away, heading over to the warmup pool. Coach yells after him, “And it better be at least a 300!”



George wins the 500.

It feels like his heart stops when he looks over and sees the glowing *I* next to his name, but then he remembers that his heart is definitely still beating, because he can hear it hammering in his ears. He’s so tired, all he can do for a moment is hang on the wall, dropping his head back and letting the cold water flood his ears, drowning out the roar of the crowd. Then he rights himself and floats over to the lane line to hug the swimmer next to him, one of Manburg’s fastest guys. They mumble congratulations to each other, and then George shakes hands with the boy on his other side.

Coach gives him a double high-five when he gets out. “State champion!” he crows. “Davidson, you crazy genius, you.”

Karl grabs his shoulder and gives him a heartfelt congratulations. Niki takes his hand and spins him around, and he’s hit by vivid memories of her doing the exact same thing on New Year’s Eve. The only person who doesn’t celebrate with him is Dream, who keeps looking at him and looking away. At one point, their eyes connect, and Dream’s mouth opens like he’s thinking about saying something, but then the moment passes and he looks away quickly, snapping his mouth shut.

Dream does the same thing *three* more times before the end of their relay warmups. Somehow, he makes it through without saying anything. The four of them get out and head over to stand behind the blocks. It’s then, when they’re already lined up for their race, that he suddenly seems to find his tongue. “George,” he says. “Can we, uh, can we please talk?”

George gapes at him. “What?”

“I said, can we t—”

“No, I heard you. You want to talk *now*? I don’t know if you’ve noticed,” he gestures in front of them, where Quackity is stepping up onto the block, “but we’re kind of in the middle of something right now.”

“No, I *mean* it, I need to talk to you,” Dream insists. “I’ve been s—” he stops, because the starter has said *take your mark* and he knows better than to talk in the middle of a start (George tries not to think about how proud he is of Dream’s knowledge of swim etiquette, which is mostly because of

their conversations in the locker room). He waits respectfully for the gun to go off before speaking again. “I’ve been such an idiot.”

It takes all of George’s strength not to say *yeah, you have*. He glances reluctantly at the pool, then back to Dream’s face. “Dream, I *promise* we can talk after this. But not here, okay? Now can we please swim our race?”

“Okay.” Dream scratches at the back of his neck. “Um. Good luck.”

George nods, mustering up a half-smile. “Last race of the season.”

“Last one, fast one,” Dream jokes, turning back around to face the pool and cheer Quackity on. George joins him, and lets himself be fully immersed in the energy of the race.

Quackity touches the wall. Karl dives in.

Karl touches the wall. Dream dives in.

George can feel his heart rate rising with pre-race nerves and anticipation. *Just get through this*, he tells himself. *Just four little laps and you’re done for the season*. He fixes his goggles and steps up close to the block.

“I’m going to swim the fastest 100 I’ve ever swum,” he says to himself, so quietly that only he can hear it. “I’m going to beat Dream.”

It’s that thought that fills his mind as he steps straight up onto the block without grabbing onto the sides, without anyone to hold his hand and help him up.

His mind goes completely blank as he dives in, and the next thing he knows is the feeling of his hand hitting the wall.

When he surfaces, his lungs are screaming for air, his head is spinning, and his legs are half-numb, but he looks over and Coach is *beaming*, and he knows he must have done something right.



Dream stares at him for the entirety of the team dinner. *Later*, George thinks, trying to send the message telepathically to Dream. He doesn’t seem to get it, though, because he keeps watching him like he’s scared he’ll try to escape. But he doesn’t. He just sits and eats his cheeseburger, listening to his teammates gossip about the other teams’ performances and pretending he can’t feel Dream’s eyes boring into his skull.

“George’s 500, though,” Karl is saying, and George tunes back in as Dream’s eyes snap away from him. “That was one hell of a swim.”

Quackity snickers. “I thought Dream was gonna burst a blood vessel cheering for him.”

Dream reddens, looking down at his plate. “It was a good race,” he mumbles.

“Sure was,” Coach agrees, to everyone at the table’s surprise. He levels a fork at George. “As soon as we get back, you’re getting back in that pool and we’re gonna train for next year’s States. You’ve got a title to uphold, Davidson.”

George scoffs. “Don’t I get a break, Coach? I just won states.”

“By less than two seconds,” Coach says. “You race how you practice. You want to ‘take a break’ halfway through the race at states next year, be my guest. Enjoy your second place medal.”

George rolls his eyes. Two seconds is a long-ass time. Maybe not so long in a 500, but it’s still enough time for him to get away with taking Monday off. “Sure, Coach,” he says. He doesn’t add, *I’ll see you on Tuesday*.

“I don’t know,” Tina says. “I think George has earned it after his leg of the relay.”

George squints. “We came fifteenth.”

“Yeah, but that’s five spots higher than you were supposed to,” Foolish says. “And *everyone* in the relay went a best time. You guys were within half a second of the school record.”

“Speaking of half a second,” Niki jumps in, and then they’re all talking about some girl from Manburg that George has barely heard of. He zones out of the conversation, looking back up at Dream, and has to stop himself from flinching when Dream’s eyes are already on him.

After dinner, they take the bus back to the hotel. The elevator ride up to their room is awkward and silent. Karl, Sapnap, Quackity, Punz, and Foolish all seem to sense the tension between the two of them, and they scurry out of the elevator the second it reaches the fourth floor. Dream and George are slower to leave, trudging slowly together to Room 404. The door clicks shut behind them and they are alone together in a locked hotel room.

“George,” Dream says, a little breathlessly. It sounds like the beginning of a long, long sentence. “I—”

“No,” George cuts him off. “Not right now. No way. I’m still wearing my suit under my clothes, we just swam in the state meet, and we have a ton of towels to hang up. Not right now.”

“So when?” Dream demands. “Are you just gonna keep putting it off? We did that for weeks, you know.”

“*You* did that for weeks. Just—” George pushes his hair out of his eyes. “Just, for God’s sake, let me take a shower.”

“Fine.”

In the bathroom, George locks the door behind him. Back against the door, he sinks to the ground, taking deep breaths. Fuck. *You can do this*, he tells himself. *It’s just a serious conversation with the guy you’re in love with. The guy who hates you, that you’re in love with. The guy who you fooled around with for weeks, but then you fell in love with him and now he hates you. The guy who—*

A thud from outside pulls him out of his thoughts. A muffled, “Fuck,” follows.

“You okay?” George calls through the door.

“Yeah, fine. Stubbed my toe,” Dream yells back.

George gets up and finally takes his stupid shower. As he scrubs the chlorine from his skin, he pretends he’s scrubbing away all of the pain and hurt and awkwardness of the last few months. This way, it’ll be gone for his conversation with Dream. Whatever it’s about, he won’t cry, or confess his feelings, or do anything equally stupid. And this is a good sign, right? He finally gets a chance to talk to Dream, which he’s been trying to do all week.

He gets out and pulls on his clean pyjamas, thanking whatever higher being will listen that he remembered to bring them in the bathroom with him. He opens the door to see Dream hanging his towel and suit on a drying rack in the middle of the room.

“Shower’s free,” he mutters.

“Thanks.” Dream doesn’t spare him a glance as he walks past, disappearing into the bathroom. George tidies the room, hanging his own swimming things and folding his clothes neatly back into his suitcase.

When Dream emerges, George is sitting on one of the beds, hair combed and teeth brushed, waiting. Dream sits on the other bed, and he pulls his legs in to sit criss-cross. They face each other for a few silent moments.

“So,” says George.

“So,” says Dream.

The fire alarm goes off.

Chapter End Notes

oopsies

anyways!!!! i’m delaying the next chapter by a week for personal reasons and also because i feel like it. so in the time between now and july 10th, the grand finale of *goggle problems*, you can tell all your friends about it, leave a comment, kudos, all that good stuff. find me on twitter where i mostly talk about myself but i occasionally mention DNF. share your thoughts with me if you would like to!

hi, i’m goose! check out my [twitter](#) if you’re looking for fic updates, extra scenes, and/or me being a toxic dnfer on a daily basis :)

Sweet and Sour

Chapter Summary

He runs his eyes all over the lines and curves and annoyingly perfect angles of Dream's face, memorising it all, burning it into his mind. Even at the end of a long swim season, his hair isn't flat or dead; it sweeps across his head, curling nicely at the ends. He's too damn attractive for his own good. He's too attractive for *George's* own good. He can't stop staring, and he knows it's weird but he can't help it. It never gets old.

Dream closes his eyes. George very pointedly does not take the opportunity to get a closer look at his eyelashes, light and fanning across his cheeks. "Um," he says, and for all his earlier bravado, he seems to have run out of steam.

"You wanted to talk," George prompts.

Chapter Notes

hey guys. i hope you didn't miss me too much in my one-week break. all i have to say is, thank you for being here, and read the tags. just. just read them. stick around at the end to say hi :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Beep. Beep. Beep. George looks at Dream.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Dream looks at George.

"Should we, like—" *Beep. Beep. Beep.* Dream gets cut off by the blaring alarm. "Should we get out? I guess we're supposed to evacuate, right?"

George wishes he could take a picture of Dream's face right now. He just looks so adorably baffled that George's heart pangs with fondness, and then it hits him all over again how lonely he feels. He never knew he could miss someone's facial expressions, but he does. He really, really does.

I miss you so much, George wants to say. *Even though you're right here*. Instead, he says, "I mean, I guess. I've never been anywhere there's been an actual fire." *Beep. Beep. Beep.* "And this is a pretty shit hotel. It could just be... glitching, or something."

"Glitching?" Dream scoffs. He stands up. "So what do you want to do?"

George stands as well, grabbing his phone and the room key from the side table. "Why don't we go see what the rest of the team is doing?"

"Okay." Dream grabs his phone too and they pad out together on socked feet, stopping just outside their door. "What if we find out it's a false alarm?"

George shrugs. “Then we find out it’s a false alarm and we go back in.” He looks around. There are only a few people in the hallway, and none of them seem to be in any particular hurry to get out. “Look, they’re down there.” *Beep. Beep. Beep.* He starts down the carpeted walk and Dream takes a few seconds to follow him, jogging to catch up. As they fall into step together, their hands brush, and George is nearly bowled over by the urge to lace their fingers together. He’s never wanted anything so much.

“And... what if it’s a real fire?” Dream asks over the blaring alarm, oblivious to George’s inner turmoil.

“Then we go outside and wait for the fire brigade,” George huffs. “Stop asking stupid questions.”

“Fire brigade,” Dream snickers quietly. “*Schew-pid.*”

George knows him well enough to know that he only gets like this when he’s really, really sleep-deprived. He rolls his eyes. “Maybe we should talk tomorrow. You clearly need rest.”

Just as suddenly as it started, the ringing cuts off, and they stop in their tracks. The sudden quiet feels damning in George’s ears.

Dream glares at him. “That’s not funny. We’re having a conversation, and we’re having it tonight.”

“Fine.” George turns and keeps walking, not checking to see if Dream is following. He doesn’t need to—the whole building can probably hear his massive feet clomping down the carpeted walk.

“Dream! George!” Karl smiles as they get close. “Coach just went down to the lobby to see what’s going on. He’s gonna text if we have to evacuate.”

“This is so weird,” Sapnap says. “Like, we probably should have run to the exit as soon as we heard the alarm, right?”

“I feel like we’re just desensitised to it, because we grew up doing fire drills all the time,” Karl reasons. He leans back against Sapnap, who pulls him into his chest.

Foolish grins. “Fire. It’s exciting.”

Dream just blinks at him, and George has to bite back a snicker.

Quackity’s crossing his arms, brow furrowed. “Not exciting. We should be getting out of here right now. What if we all burned to death?”

George shrugs. “I don’t smell any fire. And this is the shittiest hotel I’ve ever seen. There’s no way the smoke detectors here even work. It’s fine. Coach will tell us if we have to go outside.”

They quietly debate for a few moments before Coach’s head pokes out of the stairwell a few feet away. “Hey, kids. False alarm. You can go back to sleep.” And then he’s gone.

Karl snickers. “*Back* to sleep? How young does he think we are? It’s 9:30.”

George forces a smile. “Yeah. See you in the morning, Karl.”

“See you, Gogs.” Karl says. “Dream.”

Dream gives him a nod. “Good night.”

The walk back to the room feels long and heavy, like George is marching to his death. He

considers making a joke to try to ease the tension, but he's not sure he could speak around the lump in his throat. Dream unlocks the door, and they take their places on the edges of their beds, facing each other once again. They're quiet for a few moments. Dream looks at his hands, and George takes the opportunity to study him for what must be the thousandth time.

He runs his eyes all over the lines and curves and annoyingly perfect angles of Dream's face, memorising it all, burning it into his mind. Even at the end of a long swim season, his hair isn't flat or dead; it sweeps across his head, curling nicely at the ends. He's too damn attractive for his own good. He's too attractive for *George's* own good. He can't stop staring, and he knows it's weird but he can't help it. It never gets old.

Dream closes his eyes. George very pointedly does not take the opportunity to get a closer look at his eyelashes, light and fanning across his cheeks. "Um," he says, and for all his earlier bravado, he seems to have run out of steam.

"You wanted to talk," George prompts.

Dream blinks his eyes open. "Yeah, I did. I mean— *I do*." He heaves out a shaky breath, picking at his fingernails. "I wanted— First, I wanted to apologise to you. I was an idiot, and I said a lot of things I didn't mean."

The tiniest spark of hope lights up in George's chest, but still the dread lingers. "Which things did you not mean?"

"Um... everything?" Dream huffs out an awkward laugh, scooting forward on the bed. "Well, okay. I did mean what I told you at Districts. You know, um, after the relay. It's true. It has been for a while, actually."

"Oh, okay," George says. Then: "Wait, *what*?"

"I've never felt this way about anyone before," Dream rushes out. "Never. And I was so completely terrified that you would find out I was head over heels for you and laugh in my face that I— I went and fucked it all up. And I said the most awful things, and I wanted to make sure you knew that none of them were true. And that everything I said and did was because of how I felt about you. Well, how I *feel* about you."

George's mouth opens and closes, but he can't say a word.

"Don't say anything," Dream says, finally looking up from his hands to meet George's eyes. "I already know you don't like me like that. I was horrible to you after that whole 'never have I ever' thing, and you hated me even before that— I mean, shit, I broke your hand. Not that you liked me before *that*, either. Um, anyway." He scratches at the back of his neck. "I just wanted to tell you, because I know I acted like you were, um, unlikeable or something. When actually, you're the most wonderful, likeable person I've ever met in my life."

George is pretty sure he's stopped breathing. He opens his mouth to try and find something, *anything*, to say, but there's no air left in the room.

"So, yeah," Dream finishes. He smiles a little, but it doesn't reach his eyes. "Um, that was all I had to tell you. Sorry. I'm, uh, I'm gonna— I'll go find a couch in, like, the lobby or something to sleep on for tonight. Thanks for— for listening, and stuff."

He stands up and walks over to the door. George watches him, frozen in place. He's dreaming again, isn't he? He must be. He has to be.

"It's not real," he mutters. He pinches himself, hard, and... oh. *That* certainly feels real.

Fuck. This is happening, isn't it? It's not a dream. It's *not a dream*.

As the door shuts behind Dream, George suddenly regains control over his limbs, and he's leaping off the bed, throwing the door open, and bursting into the hallway. "Wait!"

Dream stops. "Huh?"

"Just, just—" George waves his hand, searching for the right words. "Just come back. Don't go."

Dream silently follows him back into the room and sits back down on his bed.

"This was supposed to be a conversation," George says, "not an info-dump-and-run. Can we please talk it through?"

"Sorry," Dream mumbles. He looks up expectantly.

George scrambles for something to say, but his thoughts are racing a mile a minute and he can't pin any of them down. "Give me a minute to process," he eventually comes up with.

Dream nods. He looks tired, George notices. George is tired too, from all the loving and hating and kissing and fighting and ridiculous mind games he's had to put up with over these past three months. And now... this. Dream doesn't hate him. Dream *likes* him. Dream is a ginormous, ginormous idiot and a pain in George's ass.

He looks up at the boy who somehow *still* holds his heart after all that's happened. Dream's never been great with silence, and right now he's twisting his fingers together nervously, pulling on his hands, and George has to sit on his own hands to stop himself from giving them to Dream to fidget with. It's with this thought in his head that he finally gives up on trying to 'process' and speaks.

"So, you *don't* hate me?"

"No."

"And..." George squints. "You really *did* want to be more than friends when I asked you about the friends with benefits thing?"

"Well, okay, listen." Dream blushes, and George has to bite back a smile. "Honestly, the original reason I didn't put my finger down is that I hadn't really realised we were friends yet. I thought of us more as enemies. Or... rivals, at least. But then you asked what we were instead and I thought you had figured it out, and—"

"Figured what out?"

"That I'm in love with you!" Dream huffs. "We've been over this."

"Oh." *Oh.* George's heart is fucking soaring, but he tries to push the feeling aside. It's too good to be true. There must be some kind of catch. It's probably, like, a prank or something. "But... you were such a jerk."

Dream buries his head in his hands in frustration. "I thought you were teasing me. Like, dangling the idea in front of me and saying, 'you'll never have this.' It felt like self-defence at the time." He drops his hands and stays hunched over like that. "And then I didn't know what to do. I couldn't go back, because I was scared you hated me. But I couldn't go forward either, because I couldn't get

over you while you were still *there* every day. So, here I am. I love you, and I don't know how to stop."

"Christ, Dream. You absolute blithering idiot."

"I know," Dream says, and his eyes are so full of sorrow when he looks up that it makes George ache. "I'm sorry."

"No," he huffs, "don't be sorry. I, er— Well, me too." He's been hiding the words for so long, he can't bring himself to say them out loud.

Dream cocks his head. "You're sorry too? For what?"

"No, not— Ugh, are you really gonna make me say it?" When Dream's confused expression doesn't change, George steels himself. *It's only three words.* "I love you."

The disbelief on Dream's face is almost comical. (Almost.) "You... *what?*" he whispers.

"I'm not gonna repeat it. But... yeah. So you don't have to, like, find somewhere else to sleep or anything. Not that I would make you do that even if I didn't like you, that would be kind of rude." He tries to keep his tone lighthearted, but his eyes are stinging and his voice wavers as he tries not to cry. "I'm sorry, I don't know why I'm getting all weird," he sniffs. "I just wasn't expecting this."

There's a crease in Dream's forehead where his eyebrows are drawn together, and a thousand different emotions in his glassy eyes. "George," he breathes.

He gives Dream a little smile, even as his eyes well up. "Dream."

And then Dream is jumping off the bed and rushing towards him, closing the distance between them just like he has so many times before, except this time he pulls George up off the bed and into his chest, wrapping strong arms around his shoulders, and George melts into the embrace, snaking his arms around Dream's waist to hold him tight.

It feels like coming home. The warmth of Dream's skin against his is another reminder that this is real, that he's not dreaming.

"*George,*" Dream says again, almost reverently. George can feel the vibrations of his voice against his cheek, feel Dream's chin move against the top of his head. "Holy shit, George, I missed you so much."

He pulls Dream in closer and squeezes his eyes shut, finally letting the tears roll down his face. He cries into the warmth of Dream's shirt, and it feels like he's letting go of all the hurt and confusion of the last few weeks. He shakes, and he's not sure if he's sobbing or laughing. Dream just holds him close until it passes. "Sorry," he sniffs.

"Don't be." Dream loosens his grip on his shoulders, but George just clutches him tighter, stubbornly refusing to let go. He *just* got this, there's no way he's letting it go now.

Dream laughs, and it sounds like he might be crying a little bit too. "You're an idiot. Stop *squeezing* me so I can kiss you."

His heart stutters, and he pulls his face away from Dream's chest and tilts it up so quickly that Dream chuckles.

"Why are you in such a hurry, George? Do you like me or something?" The words are teasing, but

his tone is sweet, affectionate.

Warm hands come up to cradle his face, and George closes his eyes, leaning into the touch as Dream wipes away his tears. When his cheeks are dry, Dream leans down to plant a soft kiss on each of them before moving to his mouth.

When they finally kiss, it's not desperate or rushed. It's gentle and sweet, and it's warm in a way that makes him feel all mushy inside. He can't deny how much he missed this feeling, the tender press of Dream's lips. It feels like Dream is trying to tell him something, with the way he holds his face so gently. Like he's precious, like he's promising to never hurt George again. He doesn't know how Dream is able to convey so much with just a touch, but he does, and it's everything George has been wanting for so, *so* long.

He can hardly believe he finally has this. He finally has *Dream*. He holds Dream's waist tighter, kissing him slowly, deeply, pouring everything he's felt in the past few weeks into the slide of his lips against Dream's.

Dream kisses him back just as sweetly, and he's so happy he thinks he could die.



“Do you know how hard you made my life these last few weeks?” Dream asks. “I was supposed to be getting over you, but you kept being so fucking cute all the time. The way you have to use your hands to climb up onto the block like a monkey, oh my God.” He feels a kiss be pressed to the top of his hair.

They're curled up together in Dream's bed now, and Dream is stroking small circles into George's arm with his thumb. The soaring feeling has made itself at home in his chest, and he's never felt happiness like this before. It feels... permanent.

George hits his chest weakly in protest. How *dare* Dream make fun of his life's greatest struggle? “I'm afraid of heights, asshole.”

“George, the blocks are like two feet off the ground!”

“If you don't shut up, you're gonna be two feet off the ground when you suck my dick tonight.”

Dream splutters, then bursts out laughing, chest shaking where George's face is pressed against it. “*Wha—* Oh my god, you're— *ha—* you're an idiot. That doesn't even make *sense*.”

George's mouth curves into a fond smile. Dream's laughter fades, and George snuggles further into his chest. It's warm and comfortable, and he thinks he wouldn't complain if they just stayed like this forever.

After a few minutes of comfortable silence, he feels one of Dream's hands twitch against his waist,

the way it does when he's stressing out about something. Another minute goes by, and then it happens again.

"Dream," he asks quietly, "what are you thinking about?"

Dream sighs. "I hurt you, didn't I? I really upset you."

"Not really," he says, shrugging the shoulder he's not laying on. "You were just being an idiot. It happens." He can tell Dream doesn't really believe him. "I wasn't really upset. I was, like... fine."

"George." Dream pulls away a little to look at his face. "For weeks, you only posted black-and-white photos on your private story, and you captioned all of them 'life is meaningless.'"

George's face is hot. "Okay, that was unrelated. That had nothing to do with you."

"It's okay to be mad at me. If you want. I feel like you're, like, letting me off the hook too easy."

"Yeah, but..." George sighs. "I was just as bad. I said mean things too. I hurt your feelings too. I think we should just forgive and forget."

"Forgive and forget," Dream repeats. "Okay. Deal."

"Okay! So... we're good now." George might be a little delirious. "That's *epic*."

Dream smiles back at him, and they're both grinning at each other. "But now you have to tell me why you hated me."

"I didn't—"

"At the beginning," Dream adds. "Before we knew each other."

"Well," George struggles to focus with the way Dream is tracing the lines of his palm. "Um. Uh. I think I was just jealous, you know? I felt like you didn't work as hard as me, and you were just fast for no reason."

"Oh." Dream frowns. "That... actually makes sense. That you would think that."

George leans up to kiss the lines that appear on his forehead. "Don't you pout at me," he says. "I don't think that anymore." He turns his hand to lace it with Dream's. "I'm not sure why I even thought so in the first place. You obviously work just as hard as everyone else. It was mean of me to say otherwise."

Dream pulls him closer again, planting a kiss in his hair. "It's funny, that's actually what I wanted people to think. But I didn't think they'd see it the way you did."

"What do you mean?"

"It's like," Dream stops to think. "If you have to try at things, it means you're struggling. When I first started swimming, I had a really, really hard time. So I tried to look like I wasn't trying, so that everyone would think it came naturally to me." He shakes his head. "Then when you thought that, I realised it wasn't what I wanted. I wanted you to see me as an equal."

"And now I do," George giggles. "Happily ever after."

"Happily ever after isn't real," Dream reminds him. "We're going to run into some problems eventually."

“And then we’re going to fix them together, and *then* happily ever after. I think we can do anything,” George mumbles into Dream’s shirt. “I like you.”

“You’re so cheesy,” Dream marvels. “I guess I should’ve known. You’re always cheesy when you’re sleepy.”

George frowns. “Always?”

“Oh, yeah. When we went to the hospital, and you were on those drugs, you were getting all sappy on me.” He laughs. “You were like, ‘Dream, I wish we could be friends. Dream, please will you be nice to me some time? I think it would be fun.’”

George wants to sink into the bed and be swallowed by the mattress. “I never said that. You’re making it up.”

“I’m not! I was so shocked.” He laughs again, loud and carefree and happy. “You told me my jacket smells good.”

“No. It smells like piss,” George says weakly.

“If you admit it smells good,” Dream whispers in his ear, “I’ll start letting you borrow it.”

Oh. That’s... a pretty good offer. “I’ll consider it.”

“Mm. Sleep on it,” Dream says sagely. “No need to rush into it.”

“Yeah.” George sighs, falling silent and letting himself be held. He just wants to stay here, basking in the feeling of Dream’s presence. He’s like the sun; warm and almost too bright to look at. He wants to tell Dream this, but his throat is tight with emotion. The words never come, so he just twists Dream’s t-shirt tighter in his fists, holding him closer, and closer, and closer. He thinks Dream understands by the way he doesn’t speak, just keeps tracing patterns across the expanse of George’s back.

After a few minutes, George’s eyes begin to drift closed and Dream’s hands slow their movements. “Wanna go to bed?” Dream murmurs. “You look tired, baby.”

“Well, you look like a garbage can,” George mumbles back.

“Well, you look like a sock monkey.”

“Well, you look like a female honey badger.”

“Well, you look like it’s your bedtime. Seriously.” Dream brushes a strand of hair off of his forehead.

“Mmph. D’wanna get up.”

“George. Come on. At least brush your teeth.”

George sighs and rolls out of bed, knowing Dream is right. He retrieves his toothbrush and toothpaste from his backpack and joins Dream in the bathroom. He wets his toothbrush, squeezes toothpaste onto it, and begins to clean his teeth. When he looks up, he has to fight a blush at the way Dream’s eyes lock onto his in the mirror. Ultimately, he loses, and Dream giggles as his face floods with red.

“Shu’up,” he complains around a mouthful of foam. Dream only laughs harder.

Once he's in his pyjamas, George practically pounces on the bed, pulling the covers tightly over himself and burying his face in a pillow. He hears Dream's shuffling footsteps crossing the room and the creaking of a bed. He picks his head up. "What are you doing?"

"Um, getting in bed?"

"No," he complains. "Get in this one."

Dream freezes. "I— are you sure? It's okay if you want some space, I don't have to go over there if you don't want."

"*Dream*. Come here."

Dream hesitantly slides out of bed and pulls back George's covers, and George snuggles into his chest as soon as he's lying down.

"Are you sure this is okay?" Dream asks again, and George would be annoyed if he didn't sound so self-conscious.

"I'm sure," George promises. "I kind of like you so much I want to hang off the Empire State Building and yell and beat my chest like Godzilla."

Dream giggles. "That's King Kong, you idiot."

"What does it matter? They're both monkeys."

"*George*." Dream is aghast, pulling away from George to look him properly in the face. "That has to be a joke. Please tell me you're joking." George doesn't say anything. "First of all, King Kong is a *gorilla*. And Godzilla is a dinosaur."

"Oh. Is he that lizard-y thing, then?"

"I'm breaking up with you," Dream deadpans, but the effect is ruined when he breaks off at the end in a yawn.

"You can't break up with me. We would have to actually be dating first. And you haven't asked me out, so. Your breakup has been rejected." George wraps his arms tighter around Dream's waist, letting his eyes flutter shut.

"Hm, okay."

George hums back. "Sleep now. Ask me out tomorrow."

"Maybe. I'll think about it." Dream reaches over and switches the lamp off. "Goodnight, George. Love you."

George smiles into Dream's chest. "See you in the morning."



They don't tell their friends right away. This time, instead of hiding it because it's a shameful secret, they're hiding it for fun, like a silly inside joke, something only they know.

The team spends the entire next day together, having fun. Because of the way the schools are divided into divisions based on access to resources, nobody on the team has any races that day. George tries very hard not to stare at Dream, with varying degrees of success. They go out for lunch, and every few minutes, Dream kicks him under the table. All seven of them pile into Karl's bed to watch a shitty movie, and everyone's tangled together. George's foot ends up under Dream's thigh, and he wiggles his toes a few times just to see Dream squirm.

They bicker like normal, and their friends seem comforted by the familiar scene after so many weeks of strange tension.

"Dream," George complains at one point. "Move your big stupid fat ugly head. I can't see the movie."

"You just can't see because you're five-foot-three," Dream shoots back, then laughs at the way George splutters.

In the afternoon, the girls have a short practice at the competition pool, since they need to stay fresh for their races tomorrow. The boys, no longer forced to conserve their energy, decide to go play paintball.

Paintball is exhausting and it hurts and it's the most fun George has ever had in a day. By the time they trudge back to the van, sweaty and battered, George's stomach aches from laughing, and everywhere else aches from being shot at mercilessly by his friends. Sapnap says he's too tired for a real dinner, so they grab pizza and inhale it on the way to the hotel. They hurry off to their rooms to clean up and crash for the night.

"We should both shower," George says when he and Dream make it up to their hotel room. They stop outside the bathroom door. "D'you wanna go first or should I?"

Dream hesitates. "You can...."

"But?" George prompts, because he knows Dream.

"But, I dunno, I was thinking that maybe we could... *both* shower. At the same time."

"Oh." George's face feels hot.

Dream smiles reassuringly, hands in his pockets. "We don't have to. I won't be offended if you don't want to."

“I want to.”

“Oh.” Dream’s throat bobs visibly. “Really? Okay! I’ll just—” and he ducks into the bathroom, turning the shower on.

“I’ll be in in a minute,” George says. He looks at himself in the hotel room mirror. He’s sweaty and dirty and gross, clothes sticking to him, and his hair is nothing short of dishevelled. He looks himself in the eye, and telepathically tells his reflection, *you can do this*. His reflection looks at him doubtfully. He ignores it.

When he finally pads into the bathroom, still in his clothes, Dream’s already showering, smelling of soap and looking refreshed and relaxed (and, for some reason, unbelievably sexy and muscular. Why doesn’t Coach’s lifting program make *George* look like that?).

“C’mon,” Dream says. George reaches for the hem of his shirt, then lets go of it just as quickly. Dream notices immediately. “George, are you shy? I’ve seen you naked before.”

“Not with paintball bruises,” he mumbles, turning away. But he peels his shirt off anyway, and Dream sucks in a breath.

“They look good on you.”

A shiver travels up George’s spine. “Turn around, idiot. Don’t watch me change.”

Dream complies, and a few seconds later, George carefully steps into the shower, under the spray. Dream stays facing the wall, and George places a careful hand on his shoulder. He turns, and they’re face to face. George swallows, mouth suddenly dry. He takes an involuntary step backwards, out of the water.

“Let’s get you clean,” Dream says, and his voice is a lot more gravelly than it was earlier. He grabs the soap bottle and pours some into his hands, then starts to wash the grime off of George’s skin.

He starts with shoulders, hands moving tentatively across aching muscles, soothing over red welts where the paintballs hit. George closes his eyes, revelling in the feeling of skin on skin after so long. It’s warm and tingly and comforting.

“Turn ‘round,” Dream instructs quietly. George lets himself be guided where Dream wants him to go, and then those same warm hands are on his back, rubbing gently and then pressing in harder.

George groans in pure bliss. “Are you giving me a massage right now?” *Don’t fucking stop.*

“You’re all tense.” Somehow, Dream knows where every bit of tension is, and exactly how much pressure to use as he soothes it away. “Relax, baby.” It’s *so* good, George thinks he might just die right there (and not because Dream called him baby. Well... not *just* because Dream called him baby). He’s floating, barely able to register anything beyond the point where Dream’s thumb finds the exact right spot and digs in. George groans again at the sweet ache of it, his nerves forgotten.

It’s also kind of hot—George knows Dream is good at everything, but he still can’t help going a little crazy every time he finds yet another thing Dream can do perfectly. (It’s probably also partially because they’re both naked, in a steamy room.) Still, he savours the massage, softening more and more into Dream with every passing second.

After several mind-melting minutes, he manages to string together a sentence. “I thought you were going to wash me.”

Dream's hands slow, and George turns back around to face him. "Oh, yeah. I need to wash the rest of you."

Slowly, gently, Dream's hands spread soap over the rest of George's body, inch by inch, like he's mapping him out. Arms, stomach, legs, ass. He murmurs soft words of admiration the whole time. They're mostly too quiet for George to hear, but when he does catch a word or two, they're always complimentary. "You're so soft," he says at one point, as his hands trace the curve of George's hips. "...drive me crazy," George hears a few seconds later.

The intimacy should be terrifying, but Dream seems so awed by every bit of him that George can't bring himself to be self-conscious about it. Dream's hands leave tingling trails of warmth everywhere, everywhere except where George is aching for it the most. He knows it's intentional. He knows Dream has noticed the way his touch is... *affecting* him. (It's pretty fucking hard to miss.)

Dream steps back, and they make burning eye contact. "Hi," Dream says conversationally, like he didn't just explore every inch of George's body. Well, almost every inch.

"You missed a spot," he says.

Dream looks down. "Hm. So I did." And he finally, *finally* wraps a hand around George, stroking him slowly with a loose grip. He laughs when George bucks into it. "Hey, hey, slow down," he teases. "I'm just trying to clean you off, I dunno what you're getting all worked up for." He lets go and pushes George back under the stream, then leans in for a slow kiss as the dirt and sweat and soap melts off him.

George is panting when they finally break apart. "I want you," he tells Dream. *Can we please get out of the fucking shower*, he means.

Dream just shrugs, like *why is that my problem?* and George wants to punch him in his stupid mouth. Or maybe kiss him. He isn't sure.

"Dream, you're literally obsessed with me. Stop pretending you don't want me too and start getting out of the shower so you can suck my dick," he scolds.

Dream groans, and George knows he's got him exactly where he wants him. "Okay, okay, fine. Let's at least wash our hair first, okay?"

"Fine. But it better be quick."



When they're out of the shower, Dream insists they get completely ready for bed before they do anything else. It's annoying and stupid and George kind of loves him for it.

"I dunno why you're making me put pyjamas on when you're just going to rip them off of me in a few minutes," he whines.

Dream scoffs from where he stands by the sink, squeezing toothpaste onto his toothbrush. "Sue me for wanting to comb my hair and put some moisturiser on before we go to sleep. I know damn well we're not gonna feel like doing all that after—" his mouth opens and closes, but no sound comes out. "...*after*. If it was up to you, we'd probably have just gotten straight in bed, dripping wet."

"What if this was how you lost your chance with me?" George threatens. "You'd look pretty stupid."

"Well, you look pretty obsessed with me, so that seems unlikely."

"Well, you look like a broken pair of glasses."

"Well, you look like a glass of orange juice."

"Well," George thinks about it. "You look like a birthday balloon."

"Well, you look like my boyfriend."

George freezes. "...Do I?"

Dream meets his eyes, looking earnest and caring and absolutely wonderful. "I don't know," he says softly. "Would you? Will you?"

"Okay," George says. "You look like my boyfriend, too."

"That's great," Dream says. He sticks the toothbrush in his mouth.

"Yeah. It is."

Even if George would rather be doing something more... *spirited*, it's strangely nice to see Dream like this. Domestic. Human. (Adorable, with toothpaste running down his chin.) He's in a t-shirt and boxers—they both are—and it's all so normal that George can't help imagining this being his life. Getting ready for bed together every night.

It's pretty nice, but it would probably be better if George wasn't so fucking tired of waiting. He brushes his teeth too, then practically drags Dream over to the bed. "Get over here."

Dream complies, letting George pull him along. "Demanding."

George pushes Dream down to sit on the bed, then moves forward to straddle his lap. The pressure and heat from where their hips meet is dizzying, and like this, he can feel exactly how much Dream wants this too. He leans in—

"George," Dream says, pulling back before their lips can touch. "Are you *sure* you don't just want to go straight to sleep?" he asks, and though he's acting serious, George knows him well enough to be able to tell when he's teasing. "I'm kind of tired from paintball earlier."

"Oh, yeah, you're right. Now that you mention it, I'm tired too." George climbs off of Dream's lap and into bed, turning on his side and closing his eyes. "Goodnight."

"Wait— But— I—" Dream is dumbfounded. "No, I didn't mean it, come back. Please say you were kidding."

George opens one eye. “Not so funny when it’s the other way around, is it?” he asks. But Dream looks so *sad* that he immediately takes pity, getting up and sitting down next to him on the edge of the bed. “Poor baby can dish it out but he can’t take it,” he teases.

“Hey, that is so not.... Wait.” Dream perks up. “You just called me *baby*.”

“Ugh, I wasn’t— I said it ‘cause you were *being* a baby, it wasn’t, like, some kind of cute nickname.” It wasn’t. It wasn’t. It really, really wasn’t. (Unless Dream wanted it to be. Did Dream want it to be?)

“Sure it wasn’t,” Dream says, leaning in to kiss him properly. His mouth is hot and demanding, and George has had a thousand daydreams like this over the past month, but not one of them can compare to the real thing. There’s still a little bit of toothpaste on Dream’s lips, and George licks it off.

He pulls back. “Minty.”

He feels, more than hears, the laugh rumbling through Dream’s chest. “George, I’m going to kill you.”

George leans back in. “Then get *on* with it,” he snarks against Dream’s lips, kissing him again. Dream bites his lower lip in retribution and *fuck*, he’s so hot. George leans over more to put his hands on Dream’s shoulders, and accidentally knocks him over. He doesn’t regret it—Dream looks good like this, flat on his back, and so he follows him down, laying down half on top of him as he presses his lips to the underside of Dream’s jaw.

They’ve done this enough times that George knows what to do, what spots make Dream’s breath catch, where to be gentle and where to suck Dream’s skin into his mouth so hard it leaves a mark. Within seconds he has Dream whimpering and gasping underneath him. “George, *please*.”

“I’m busy,” George mumbles into Dream’s collarbone. When he runs out of skin on Dream’s neck to run his mouth over, he pulls Dream’s shirt off. “Told you we’d just take this off.” And then he’s back, taking his time, exploring Dream’s skin with his tongue and teeth the way Dream explored his with his hands. Except a thousand times more torturous. He hopes.

Under him, Dream squirms, trying and failing to hold in his whines. “C’mon, hurry up, why are you going so slow?”

“Shush,” George scolds. “I never get to do this.” He licks over Dream’s nipple with a wide, flat tongue, then blows cool air over it and watches Dream shiver. “We’re always in a hurry.” He’s silent for a few minutes as he learns the lines of Dream’s abs. It’s only when he’s finished sucking a hickey into the top of Dream’s hipbone (just because he feels like it) that he’s satisfied with his work. He pulls away. “Okay.”

Dream looks at him, pupils blown and eyes glazed over. “Okay? So I can suck you off now?”

“Actually, I was thinking we could, um, have sex. If you want.”

“This is sex.”

George rolls his eyes, face burning red-hot. “You know what I mean,” he hisses. “Ass-dick sex.”

Dream bursts out laughing. “Ass-d- *What?!?*”

“Fine,” George huffs. “It was just a suggestion, we don’t have to.”

Dream suddenly doesn't seem to find it quite so funny anymore. "No, wait! No. I— I—" he swallows. "I want to." He sits up.

George fidgets. "So, are you going to do it? Or should I?" They both know what he's talking about.

"What kind of question is that?" Dream smirks. "You're obviously a bottom. You're, like... tiny. And you're a filthy little masochist."

"Okay, well. That's— Shut up. *You* have a praise kink. And you like it when I pull your hair," George points out. "Like, what if..." he consults the small amount of sex-knowledge he has. "What if I held you down by your hair as I pushed into you, and then I said, *Good boy, you're taking me so well*. What about *that*?"

Dream ducks his head, and George can see goosebumps on the back of his neck as his shoulders shake in an involuntary shiver. "Do you have to *say* it like that?" he whispers.

George giggles. "I'm right, though."

"Listen, okay. Listen. George— stop laughing. Cut it out," Dream swats at him. "Listen. How about this: I'll top this time, and you top next time."

Honestly, George doesn't mind what he does, as long as it's with Dream. "Sure." Both ways sound pretty fucking good. "I've never..."

"I know. Me neither. I mean, I've, like..." Is Dream *blushing*? "I don't know. I've done it to myself." He's definitely blushing. "And I've done some research, but..." He trails off. "I'll take care of you. We can figure it out together."

"Okay."

"Okay." Dream stands up, and George stares unabashedly at his still-tented boxers as he opens the bedside table drawer and pulls out—

"What— Why do you have *lube*?" George splutters. "And a condom? Were you expecting this to happen when you packed your States bags?"

Dream looks away, suddenly shy. "No, idiot. I snuck away this morning and bought them. I didn't know what we'd do tonight, but I assumed we'd do *something*, and I wanted to be prepared. To do it right for you." His voice is so gentle and sweet that it makes George's face flame. He scooches a few inches back until he's laying on his back in the middle of the bed, head on a pillow.

"You're such a simp."

"Only for you." Dream climbs back onto the bed, swinging a leg over George's body so he's right above him, a knee on either side of George's waist. They kiss again, but this time it's dirty—messy and desperate in the best way. George gasps into Dream's mouth.

"Can we please hurry this up?" George complains, wriggling out of his shirt like it's burning him. Dream helps, pulling it over his head and throwing it on the floor. Then there are burning hot hands on the waistband of his boxers.

"I'm gonna take these off, okay?" Dream says, and George answers by lifting his hips to push them past the curve of his ass. Dream's breath catches when he sees George's cock, flushed red and curving desperately up towards his stomach, messy and leaking.

“Look at you,” he groans, pressing a thumb into the tip. “So wet, all for me.”

A sound tears out of George’s throat. Dream’s touch is burning into him, spreading fire through his veins. “Please,” he gasps.

“Needy,” Dream teases, sitting back on George’s thighs. “How long has it been since you last...?”

It takes a second for the words to reach George’s poor, struggling brain. “The last time you sucked me off in the locker room. Before the party.”

“What?” Dream laughs out loud. “George, that was over a month ago. In all the time since then, you didn’t touch yourself once?”

“I wanted to,” George says. “I tried. But... I don’t know, it just reminded me of you too much.”

“Oh.” Dream’s smile disappears. “I was such an idiot for hurting you. I’m so sorry,” he repeats for the hundredth time.

As much as George appreciates that Dream cares about his feelings, he would really prefer for Dream to care about his dick. “Quit apologising and touch me,” he orders. “Or *I’ll* be the one hurting *you*.”

Dream smiles and gets off of him, and he drops his head back when he hears the click of a bottle cap.

Moments later, Dream is back, underwear discarded, fingers slick and shiny. He leans down to kiss George again, and George relaxes into it until he feels the faintest whisper of fingers against his rim. He gasps, and Dream pulls back to look him in the eyes.

“You sure?” he asks for the bajillionth stupid time as his fingers trace slow circles around.

“Yes, I’m sure,” George groans. “Do it already.”

“Okay, okay.” A push, a second of resistance, and then the tip of Dream’s finger is slowly sliding in.

It’s weird—George thought he would know what it would feel like, but he really, really didn’t. He takes a shaky breath and scrunches his nose. “Huh.”

“You alright? Does it hurt?”

“I mean, a little, but it’s fine. Just feels... *really* weird.” George’s breath gets more and more ragged as Dream pushes his finger further in. It’s only been a few seconds, but he doesn’t know if he’ll ever be able to get used to the feeling of having something *inside* of him.

He tries to relax as Dream pulls his finger out a little bit, then pushes it back in. Dream uses his other hand to push George’s hair off of his forehead, pressing a gentle kiss to the skin there as he continues the steady *in, out, in, out*. George thinks he’s mostly turned on by the idea of it, the knowledge that it’s Dream who’s doing this to him. It’s *Dream* whose finger is pumping in and out of him, stretching him open. *In, out. In, out. In, out.*

“Another?”

George nods, and a second finger joins the first. This time, it’s more of a stretch, but it doesn’t hurt as much as he expected. In fact, as the discomfort fades, it starts to feel kind of good. Dream

distracts him with a languid slide of lips against lips, and the seconds melt away as they lazily make out, each movement of Dream's tongue sending more and more heat pooling in George's gut as he loosens and relaxes. He's getting more and more impatient by the second, needing relief but not getting any. He breaks the kiss. "Dream."

"What, baby? What's wrong?"

"I thought..." he brings his hands up to cover his face, embarrassed. "I thought it would feel, like, better than this. Like, it feels good, but..." *it's not enough*. He doesn't want to hurt Dream's feelings, but his need to come is slowly overriding every rational thought.

"Oh." Dream laughs out loud. "Well, why didn't you say so?" The press of his fingers gets more deliberate, sliding against George's walls like he's waiting for something to happen.

George doesn't get it, until— "*fuck!*" He arches into Dream, scrabbling at his shoulders as the fingers inside him just barely graze a spot that makes him see stars. His cock twitches against his stomach, and Dream grins.

"There we go. Again?" And he finds it again, aiming his next thrust directly into it.

It's unlike anything George has ever felt before. The pleasure of being touched after so long is explosive, all-encompassing, and George chokes on an embarrassingly loud moan, unable to formulate a single thought until a few seconds after Dream's fingers have moved away.

"Good?"

George lets his head fall back, breathing heavily, before Dream's fingers move again, returning to their previous easy slide in and out. "Holy shit," he says faintly.

And, like, okay. He's not a *complete* idiot, he knew theoretically that he is a person with a prostate, and that as a person with a prostate, it would probably feel good if someone touched him there, but knowing it and *feeling* it are two vastly different experiences.

Dream smiles knowingly, but doesn't aim his fingers there again, just keeps slowly stretching him open.

"Another finger," George demands breathlessly. He knows he's not ready for it, but the faster Dream's done prepping him, the faster he can finally come.

"Be patient," Dream scolds, grazing him *right there* again.

"Dream, *please*," he begs. "Please, please, it hurts." He's so turned on it aches in every atom of his body, and he doesn't know whether to push Dream away, pull him closer, or just drop dead on the spot to end the agony.

Dream stops. "Do you want me to just get you off now? Would that be better?" It's a genuine offer, and George is so, so tempted to give in, but he shakes his head.

"No, no, don't stop! Want you inside me," he manages. "Now."

"Just be patient, George." Dream looks like he's in pain. "Okay, another finger."

The stretch is... well, it's kind of uncomfortable. George shuts his eyes and breathes, slow and deep, until it passes.

“Hey, you doing okay?” With his other hand, Dream grabs George’s thigh.

George yelps. “Careful! I have a paintball bruise there, idiot. I *was* doing fine until you started manhandling me like this. I’m *fragile*.”

Dream smiles wickedly. “Oh, you are?” And he presses his thumb into the bruise.

George jerks on the bed, torn between pushing into the touch and pulling away. It’s electric, disorienting, and so, so hot. “Fuck,” he breathes. “Jesus Christ.”

Dream’s still slowly working him open, and he nudges that spot inside him again as he presses down on another bruise. “Oh yeah? You like that?”

“No,” George lies, trying to rock his hips back onto Dream’s fingers, to get him to touch him where he really wants it again. His cock is throbbing now, and Dream just keeps working him open, slow, methodical, unbothered. (Okay, maybe a little bit bothered. But not nearly as bothered as George is.)

“Okay,” he says. Then he does it again, and George is unable to hold back a loud, embarrassing sound.

Dream’s looking entirely too cool and collected. This pisses George off. So he decides to remedy the situation. “Dream, that’s so *good*,” he moans, sliding a hand up to clutch at Dream’s hair. He pulls. “I *need* you.”

Dream closes his eyes. “Fucking *hell*, George.” He pulls his fingers out, and George didn’t think he would miss the feeling of them filling him up, but he does. He lays his head back and listens to the crinkle of a foil wrapper, using the brief reprieve to try and calm himself down, in hopes that it will lessen some of the pressure in his gut. He takes slow, deep breaths, forcing himself to think normal, non-horny thoughts. *Fractions. Lawnmowers.*

...Dream could mow my lawn any day of the week, his brain helpfully supplies. He groans out loud. *What does that even mean?*

Giving up on trying to distract himself, he gives in and turns to the side, watching Dream slick himself up. It’s the only sound in the room, other than their harsh breathing. “This isn’t going to last long,” he warns Dream, and he’s briefly surprised by how wrecked his voice sounds. He hasn’t been making *that* much noise—has he? “I’m so turned on right now, I swear you could just, like, *poke* me and I’d probably come.”

“Believe me, I get it,” Dream says. “I’m not gonna be able to hold on very long either.” And he’s back over George, lacing their fingers together and leaning down for a soft kiss. “Hi. How’s your day?”

“Hi. It’s pretty good, how’s yours?”

“My day is also good.”

“That’s good,” George says. He waits a moment. “Are you gonna fuck me or what?”

“Manners, George,” Dream scolds, even as he lines himself up. “Were you raised in a barn?”

“Ye— *ah*.” George feels his eyes roll back in his head a little at the first push, the way it catches on his rim, the way it’s so much bigger than fingers. Dream goes slow, inch by inch, letting George adjust. George takes it, and takes it, and breathes through the pain, holding onto Dream’s hand for

dear life. He briefly regrets being so impatient when Dream was prepping him, but he also thinks he might have exploded if he had to wait any longer. The feeling is unlike anything he's ever experienced, but he's already greedy for *more, more, more* of it. He wants to feel like this every day. Sure, it hurts, but the worst part is already over, fading into something undeniably *good*. "God. You're so... fuck," he gasps.

"So what?" Dream asks, but he's grinning like he knows.

George indulges him. "So *big*." He can feel the rhythm of Dream's heartbeat where they're connected, and it mixes with his own until he's not sure whose is whose. He squirms, wriggling a little in Dream's hold. "C'mon, move."

"Fine. Fine." He slowly pulls out, then slides back in, sending electricity shooting through George's veins. He examines George's face for any discomfort. "Y'okay?"

"Again. Do that again," he orders, and Dream complies. Then he does it again, and again, and again. It's not rough or jerky, just slow, rolling friction, but it still punches George's breath out of him. "Harder."

Dream rolls his eyes. "What's the magic word?"

"Dream, I swear to fucking God I'm going to kill you if you don't listen to me right now." He's pretty sure that wasn't what Dream had in mind, but it seems to work on him anyway.

Dream starts thrusting in harder, picking up a rhythm, and then he tilts his hips a little, and George hears himself whine, "fuck, fuck, right there," mind whiting out with pleasure.

And it's so much, all at once: Dream's in his ear, gasping out his name, hands all over him, hitting exactly the right spot inside of him. He loses track of what he does, what he says. All he knows is *Dream, Dream, Dream*, overwhelming in the best way.

"Dream, please, I'm so close, please—"

"Wait a second, baby." Dream keeps going, going and going and going, and there's no way George is going to live through this. He's inching closer and closer to death with every second. Dream feels it too—it's obvious when he's saying George's name like that, like it's a prayer.

He's hot all over, writhing on the bed, and it just keeps building higher and higher, and it's so good it aches in every one of his bones.

Just when George can't decide if he's in ecstasy or agony, Dream wraps a hand around him, and he chokes out a sob at the tightening in the pit of his stomach. Dream's thrusts are starting to get sloppier, more erratic, and it only takes a few strokes for George to tip completely over the edge.

It's blinding, and disorienting, and it lasts *forever*, and it's the hardest George has ever come in his life. It tears through him, and he shakes and shakes, crying out Dream's name. When he finally comes back into himself several minutes later, Dream is sitting next to him, rummaging around in the nightstand.

George's eyes flutter shut. Exhausted, he rolls over onto his stomach and buries his face into the pillow.

Dream turns around and groans. "Ew— George. We have to clean up. You're covered in cum, and now you're getting it all over the sheets. Don't you dare go to sleep right now."

“You’ve killed me. You’ve killed me dead,” he announces, muffled by the pillow. He doesn’t think he could move right now if he tried.

Dream laughs. “Okay.” His quiet footsteps pad away, and then he’s back with a towel, rolling George over and wiping him off. “You made a huge mess, idiot. I don’t think I’ve ever seen this much cum in my life.”

“Gross. But that’s why we have two beds,” George says without opening his eyes. “One for cum, one for sleep.” Dream keeps cleaning him, gradually moving lower, and George opens his eyes, flinching away. “Dream! I’m sensitive.”

“I’m being gentle, quit whining.” Dream finishes cleaning him up and wipes at the sheets for a minute before he sighs and balls up the towel. “Okay, c’mon, let’s get you to bed. For real this time. Clothes or no?”

“No clothes,” George sighs. “Too tired.” Instead of getting up from the bed, he just shuts his eyes and lifts his arms in invitation, and he’s weightless for a few seconds until Dream sets him down gently on the other bed. He pulls the covers up over himself, letting Dream worry about turning off the light and clambering in next to him.

“Goodnight, George,” Dream whispers. “I love you.”

“Night, Dream,” George’s voice comes out slurred with exhaustion. “Love you too.”

A soft kiss on his hair is the last thing he registers before he drifts off, warmer and more comfortable than he’s ever been before.



“Who stole my Sour Patch Watermelon?” George yells in the locker room on Tuesday after practice when he finishes getting dressed. It’s the off-season now, but most of the team is back to practising for the postseason championship meets.

“Not me,” Sapnap yells, right in his ear. He flinches away from the noise, turning to swat at him.

In the corner, Foolish tilts his head. “Just *one* Sour Patch Watermelon? How can you tell there’s one missing? Did you count them?”

George is baffled. “Watermelon. Plural. Like... they’re *all* gone.” He waves the empty bag in the air, and tiny grains of sugar fly everywhere. *Oops. At least they’ll dissolve on the wet floor.*

“The plural of watermelon is *watermelons*.”

“No it isn’t,” Dream chimes in from the locker next to George’s, where he’s halfway through moving his stuff back to its rightful place. He starts heading back to fetch his next armful of stuff

from his other locker. “They’re like slices. Watermelon slices.”

George narrows his eyes. He’s looking... a little too self-satisfied. “Dream. Did you steal all of my candy?”

Dream freezes in his tracks. “Um. No?” he tries. He turns around, looking sheepish.

“Prove it.” George closes the distance in two quick strides, yanking Dream down to his level by the collar of his t-shirt. He crushes their lips together in a searing kiss, one that’s a little too passionate for the middle of the locker room, but his Sour Patch Watermelon are more important.

When he finally tears himself away, Dream is dazed and out of breath, and George’s jaw drops in outrage. “You *did* eat them! I could taste it!”

Dream doesn’t say anything. There are a few seconds of charged silence, and then—

“Can I just be the first to say, what the *fuck*?” Quackity splutters.

Oh. *Shit*. “It’s not what it looks like,” George blurts out.

“Actually, it is,” Dream announces. “We’re in love.”

Sapnap bangs his head into a locker.

Karl frowns, putting his hand in between Sapnap’s head and the locker when he tries to do it again. “That’s.... How? Like a week ago, George was telling me how much you were bothering him.”

“That was ‘cause he basically told me he didn’t love me,” George admits, face hot. “I was a bit torn up about it.”

Karl gapes at Dream. “You’re *kidding*.”

Dream winces. “Yeah, that one was my bad. But everything’s cool now. Right, George?”

“Wha– No!” George exclaims. “You ate my Sour Patch Watermelon! I cannot believe you would do this to me, Dream. What else are you hiding from me? A secret other boyfriend? How can I trust you after this?”

Dream steps forward again, letting his hands fall loosely around George’s waist. He presses a soft kiss to George’s lips. “I’m sorry. I’ll buy you some more,” he promises.

“Okay,” George says happily, relaxing into his chest.

“No way. I do not need to be here for this.” Quackity grabs his backpack and walks towards the door, but he barely makes it two steps before Punz is yanking him backwards.

“Stop that, Q. Wait up.”

“Come on, lovebirds,” Karl says with a smile, swinging his bag over his shoulder. “Time to go.”

George lets go of Dream to grab his backpack, and then they’re all walking out of the locker room.

They run into the girls’ team in the hallway.

“Guys!” shouts Foolish. “Guess who’s *dating*.”

“Karl and Sapnap?” Niki guesses.

Karl blanches. “How did you know?”

“She didn’t, dumbass.” Sapnap smacks his shoulder. “She does now, though.”

George looks at Dream, then Punz, then Quackity, then Foolish, then around at all of their teammates. He’s relieved to find them all looking about as confused as he feels. “Er,” he starts, “can someone clue the rest of us in? You two—” he points at Sapnap and Karl— “are *together*? Like, since when? Why didn’t you tell us?”

Karl—who seems to have recovered from his embarrassment—giggles and grabs Sapnap’s hand. “Since, um, the Halloween party.”

“Oh, *ew*,” Quackity complains, pulling a face. “That text you sent me was about having sex with *Sapnap*? I need to bleach my eyes out, *ugh*. Jesus, Karl. I miss the time before I knew this.”

Karl and Sapnap’s faces are both identical shades of scarlet.

“Okay, that’s not who we were talking about, though,” Foolish says impatiently. “Fucking— *Dream* and *George*. Can you believe this shit?”

Several jaws drop.

“*No*,” Tina gasps.

“You’re kidding,” says Puffy.

“Called it!” Niki crows. Everyone looks at her. “What? I spent hours listening to George be all like ‘Oh my God, Dream this. Dream that. Guess what Dream did. Have I told you how annoying Dream is lately?’ I was pretty much just waiting for them to make it official at this point.”

George’s jaw drops, and he makes a few unattractive spluttering noises.

“George, why do you talk about me so much?” Dream asks, wrinkling his nose in mock-disgust. “Are you, like, obsessed with me or something?”

George scoffs. “Not as obsessed as you are with me,” he defends. “I literally live in your head rent-free. All you do is eat, sleep, and think about me.”

“There’s one other thing I do, actually. Her name is ‘your mo—’”

“Guys!” Sapnap interrupts. “Literally shut the fuck up.” He turns to the girls. “They— They *made out* in the middle of the locker room. Can you believe that?”

George shrugs, unapologetic. “I had to figure out who ate all my candy. And you know what? It worked. I was right; it was Dream. So... there.”

Puffy raises an eyebrow. “In the locker room?”

George reddens when he remembers the, uh, *other* things he and Dream have done in the locker room, but he’s saved from having to speak when Dream steps towards him, gently taking his hand. “Yeah, that’s, um—” He brings his free hand up to scratch at the back of his head— “that’s our bad. We’ll keep it out of the locker room, we promise.”

“We’re just messing with you guys,” Karl says gently. “I mean, I can’t speak for all of us, but I’m

really happy for you guys. You're two of our best athletes, you guys deserve it."

"Well, I think it's gross," Quackity says, hoisting his backpack further up onto his shoulder and starting towards the glass doors at the end of the hallway. "I'm out of here."

"I should get going, too," Tina says, and then they all start to trickle out until only Dream and George are left.

"Wow," Dream says, voice shaking with poorly restrained laughter. "We're the only ones here, George. Does that sound familiar?"

George punches him in the arm. "Shut up. We are not about to have sex in the middle of the hallway right now."

Dream wheezes. "Why not? We could go in the locker room."

"Wha— *Dream!* Two minutes ago, you literally said, 'We'll keep it out of the locker room.' How is this keeping it out of the locker room?"

Dream only laughs harder.

"I'm serious," George complains. "Stop *laughing!* If you shut up right now, we can have sex when we get home. There's no one at my house right now."

Dream clamps his mouth shut, laughter silenced in an instant.

"That's what I thought," George says smugly.

They grab their stuff and walk out to the car together, hand-in-hand. Although it's barely necessary in the warm early-spring air, George pulls Dream's jacket tighter around him, breathing it in. "I love you," he says, just because.

"You know, it's the craziest thing," Dream says, squeezing his hand.

"What?"

"That's *exactly* what your mom said to me last night."

"Dream!" George hits him, scandalised. "You're such an idiot. Shut up."

"You're gonna forgive me, though."

"Oh yeah? Why's that?"

"Just wait."

They reach the car, and Dream opens the passenger-side door for him. On the seat, there's a brand-new bag of Sour Patch Watermelon.

George stops in his tracks. "What the hell. You're so—" He pushes his hair back out of his face. "Marry me. Right now."

"Hm. Not right now. But one day, that would be nice." Dream leans down to kiss him before walking around to his side of the car. "Well? Are you getting in?"

"One day," George repeats. He steps up into the car; into his future. "Yeah, I'm in."

Chapter End Notes

whew. this is it, guys. it's all over. thank you so much for all the love on this one. it means the world to me to see your comments, kudos, bookmarks, and your reactions on twitter. make sure to leave a comment on this last one and tell me how you felt about the story and what you might want to see from me in the future.

if you're wondering what to read now that your favourite multichap is over, you should consider user subbing to me, because i have TONS of fun stuff coming up, including a long friends to lovers oneshot, another big NSFW multichap, and an epilogue for my other multichap, *it's always been you*. you don't want to miss any of that!!

anyways, thank you for being here. thanks for reading. read my other stuff if you liked this one. come find me on twitter, we can be bffs.

i love you guys, stay cool, and for the last time (at least on this fic), xoxo goose

End Notes

hi, i'm goose! check out my [twitter](#) if you're looking for fic updates, extra scenes, and/or me being a toxic dnfer on a daily basis :)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!